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THE EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGNS.

VOL. II.



THE
EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGNS,
1882 TO 1885,

AND THE
EVENTS WHICH LED TO THEM.

BY
CHARLES ROYLE,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAPS AND PLANS.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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1886.

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THE EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGNS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOUDAN AND THE MAHDI.

Disturbances in the Soudan—Abdel Kader's Demand for Reinforcements—
The Soudan—Gordon Pasha—History of the Revolt—The Mahdi—
Progress of the Rebellion—State of Affairs.

SCARCELY had the Arabi revolt been suppressed, than trouble arose in another quarter.

Towards the end of October 1882, Abdel Kader Pasha, the Governor-General of the Soudan, telegraphed from Khartoum that the troops which he had sent against the Mahdi had been cut off, and that a force of 10,000 men should be sent as a reinforcement, otherwise the Pasha would not be able to defend the town. He stated that, without a large force at his disposal, the insurrection would spread through all parts of the Soudan, in which case the pacification of the country would require an army of at least four times the number asked for.

The Soudan is a vast tract of Africa stretching from Egypt on the north to the Nyanza Lakes on the south, and from the Red Sea on the east, to the western boundary of Darfur on the west. Khartoum, at the junction of the Blue and White Niles, is about

equally distant—that is to say, between 1100 and 1200 miles as the crow flies—from the northern boundary of Egypt, the Mediterranean, and from the southern limit of the Khedive's equatorial dominions, the Lake Victoria Nyanza, and the kingdom of Uganda. From Khartoum to the ports of Souakim and Massowa on the Red Sea, the eastern limit of the Soudan, is about 480 miles, and to the westward limit, which is the most indefinite of all, but is generally fixed at the western boundary of Darfur, it is nearly 800 miles. Going down the Nile from Khartoum, in the direction of Egypt, the principal places are Berber, about 200, and Dongola, about 350 miles to the north.

If one looks in the other direction—namely, southward—and follows the course of the White Nile from Khartoum towards the Equator, the principal places are El Duem, rather more than 100 miles ; Fashoda, 500 miles ; and Gondokoro and Lado, 800 miles from Khartoum. These distances are measured as the crow flies. By river the journey from Khartoum to Gondokoro is estimated at 1400 miles. The Soudan is as large as India. It stretches 1600 miles in one direction, and 1300 in another. It is inhabited by warlike tribes of the same faith. It has neither railways, canals, nor, except the Nile at some periods of the year, navigable rivers, and its only roads are camel-tracks.

The sovereignty of the Soudan was first seized by Egypt in the year 1819, when Mehemet Ali, hearing of the anarchy prevailing in that country and wishing to introduce the benefits of a regular government and of civilisation, and at the same time to occupy his troops, ordered his son Ismail with a large army of regulars and irregulars, to invade the country. Ismail reached Khartoum, and for a time governed the Soudan ; but he and all his followers were burnt alive by a native ruler,

who first made them drunk at his own table, and then burned the house over their heads. Terrible vengeance was taken, and Egyptian sovereignty was established over Senaar and Kordofan.

It was not until the year 1826 that the Soudan derived any benefit from its Egyptian rulers. In that year Khurshid Pasha was appointed Governor of the Soudan. He reigned for eleven years, establishing Egyptian sovereignty over Fashoda, and teaching the people of Khartoum to substitute brick houses for their huts of skin and thatch.

In 1841 a rebellion broke out in Kassala, which was quelled only to break out again next year, when it was finally suppressed. At this time the Soudan consisted of seven provinces, namely, Fazaglou, Senaar, Khartoum, Tokar, Berber, Dongola, and Kordofan.

In 1856 the Khedive, Saïd Pasha, visited the Soudan, and almost decided to abandon the country, but desisted in deference to the representations of the Sheikhs and Notables, who laid great stress upon the inevitable anarchy which would result from such an abandonment. He decreed reforms, most of which appear to have been punctually neglected. One Governor-General succeeded another, their chief duty being border-warfare with Abyssinia, and the suppression of rebellions which periodically broke out.

In 1865, 8000 Negro troops at Tokar whose pay was in arrear for eighteen months, revolted. Troops were sent from Cairo by Korosko, while others were landed at Souakim. The rebellion was quelled, the Negro troops sent to Egypt, and the Soudan garrisoned with Egyptian troops.

In 1866 Massowa and Souakim were given to Egypt by the Sultan of Turkey.

In 1870 Sir Samuel Baker set out to conquer the

Equatorial Provinces, and in the same year the German, Munzinger, annexed Senaar to Egypt. Sir Samuel Baker having returned from the Equator in 1873, Gordon Pasha was appointed Governor-General of the Equatorial Provinces in the following year.

In 1875 Darfur was annexed in the west, and in the extreme east, to the south of Abyssinia, Harrar also was conquered.

When by authority of Ismail Pasha, Gordon Pasha became absolute ruler of the Soudan he established a system of just and equitable government, which led, after his departure, to the revolt against the misgovernment of Egyptian officials. Gordon had warned the Khedive, before his appointment, that he would render it for ever impossible for Turks and Circassians to govern the Soudan again. He was as good as his word. By treating the people justly, by listening attentively to all their grievances, and mercilessly repressing all those who defied the law, he accustomed the Soudanese to a much higher standard of government than any that had prevailed in those regions before.

After Gordon's departure a whole horde of Turks and Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks were once more let loose to harry the Soudanese. All his old officials were marked men. His policy was reversed. Ilias, one of the greatest slave-owners of Obeid, was allowed to re-return to Khartoum ; and this man—in concert with Zubehr, the king of the slave-dealers (afterwards interned at Gibraltar)—is believed to have taken advantage of the wide-spread discontent occasioned by the misgovernment, to foment the rebellion which, under the Mahdi's leadership, assumed such serious proportions.

The chief causes of the rebellion were : 1. Venality and oppression of the officials, particularly those in the lower classes ; 2. Suppression of the slave-trade ; 3.

Military weakness. Of the first it is unnecessary to say much. The same well-known kind of oppression that goes on in Turkey obtained also in the Soudan, though perhaps not quite to the same extent. Here as there, all over the country there was a class of small officials on salaries from 200 to 400 piastres a month who had the responsible duty of collecting the taxes.

The officials were irregular soldiers, Bashi-Bazouks, Turks, Tunisians, &c. The first-named race perhaps predominated. As there could be but little supervision over such an immense area, these men had it pretty much their own way, and squeezed the people to their hearts' content. There were instances where the Bashi-Bazouk on his salary maintained twelve horses, twenty servants, and a number of women, and this in places where the payments for the water for his cattle alone would have cost more than three times his salary. It was no uncommon thing for a peasant to have to pay his taxes four or five times over without the treasury being any the richer.

That the suppression of the slave-trade, or rather the difficulties thrown in its way, was also a potent cause, is evident from the list of the tribes who supported the Mahdi. Many, if not the whole majority of these tribes, were Baggara, or owners of cattle. These tribes were all of Arab descent, and from time immemorial had been inveterate slave-hunters. As they were also poor and unwilling cultivators they were in the habit of paying the sum their tribe was rated at by selling slaves, whom they would steal from the Jebel Nuba or other districts further south. This slave traffic was managed somewhat as follows :—Say the annual tribute of the tribe was 5000*l*. Having no money and no wealth but their cattle, it was evident that they were quite unable to pay that sum. In such cases the Kor-

dofan merchant would offer to pay it, if the tribe would supply him with an equivalent in slaves, say one thousand. Should the required number of slaves not be forthcoming, then the tribe would agree to pay the balance by selling him cows at a certain rate. Should the tribe fail in the bargain, the merchant would refuse to pay the Government, and the latter would have to send troops to worry the tribe. These troops would probably plunder and destroy far more than was necessary, with the result of still further impoverishing the tribe, making the Government detested, and the people only too willing to seize any opportunity of escaping from it.

To complete this picture of Soudan administration, it is necessary to show how the merchant settled with the Government. Now, when he made his bargain the trader well knew that the Government having generally but little money in the treasury, its employés were mostly some fifteen to twenty months in arrear, and were compelled to discount their pay at a loss of 40 to 60 piastres. With these bills the merchant could pay the Government.

Subsequently, the Government would seem to have become really desirous to put down the slave-trade, and thus these tribes lost the only means of paying their taxes. Notwithstanding this, the annual tribute expected from them was still the same.

The Djellabs were also, to a man, against the Government, slave-trading being both their principal and by far most profitable business.

In addition to the foregoing there can be no doubt that the Arabi revolt also had its effect on the Soudan population. Telegrams were actually sent them by Arabi ordering them not to recognise the authority of the Khedive. At the same time all the available troops were withdrawn.

Mahomet Achmet, the Mahdi, was a Dongolawdi, or native of the province of Dongola. His grandfather was called Fahil, and lived on the Island of Naft. This island lies east of and opposite to Ordeh, the native name for the capital of Dongola. His father was Abdullahi, by trade a carpenter. In 1852 this man left and went to Shendy, a town on the Nile south of Berber. At that time his family consisted of three sons and one daughter, called respectively Mahomed, Hamid, Mahomet Achmet (the Mahdi), and Nur-el-Sham. At Shendy another son was born called Abdullah. As a boy, Mahomet Achmet was apprenticed to his uncle, a boatman, residing at Shakabeh, an island opposite Senaar. Having one day received a beating from his uncle, he ran away to Khartoum, and joined the free school or 'Medressu' of a fakir (learned man, head of a sect of dervishes), who resided at a village close to Khartoum. This school was attached to the tomb of Sheikh Hoghali, the patron saint of Khartoum, who was greatly revered by the inhabitants of that town and district. (The sheikh of this tomb or shrine, although he kept a free school and fed the poor, derived a very handsome revenue from the gifts of the pious. He claimed to be a descendant of the original Hoghali, and through him of Mahomet.) Here Mahomed Achmet remained for some time studying religion, the tenets of his sheikh, &c., but did not make much progress in the more worldly accomplishments of reading and writing. After a time he left and went to Berber, where he joined another free school kept by a Sheikh Ghubush, at a village of that name situated nearly opposite to Mekherref. This school was also attached to a shrine greatly venerated by the natives. Here Mahomet Achmet remained six months completing his religious education. Thence he went to Aradup village, south of Kana. Here in 1870

he became a disciple of another fakir—Sheikh Nur-el-Daim. Nur-el-Daim subsequently ordained him a sheikh or fakir, and he then left to take up his home in the island of Abba, near Kana, on the White Nile. Here he began by making a subterranean excavation into which he made a practice of retiring to repeat for hours one of the names of the Deity, and this accompanied by fasting, incense-burning, and prayers. His fame and sanctity by degrees spread far and wide, and Mahomet Achmet became wealthy, collected disciples, and married several wives, all of whom he was careful to select from among the daughters of the most influential Baggara sheikhs, and other notables. To keep within the legalised number (four), he was in the habit of divorcing the surplus and taking them on again according to his fancy. About the end of May 1881, he began to write to his brother fakirs, and to teach that he was the Mahdi foretold by Mahomet, and that he had a divine mission to reform Islam, to establish a universal equality, a universal law, a universal religion, and a community of goods; also that all who did not believe in him should be destroyed, were they Christian, Mahomedan, or Pagan. Among others, he wrote to Mahomet Saleh, a very learned and influential fakir of Dongola, directing him to collect his dervishes, followers and friends, and to join him at Abba. This sheikh, instead of complying with his request, informed the Government, declaring the man must be mad.

The Mahdi commenced operations in July 1881.

In the beginning of Ramadan 1298 (2nd July, 1881), the Governor-General of the Soudan, Reouf Pasha, heard that on the Island of Abba, on the White Nile, in the Fashoda Mudireh, there was a certain religious sheikh, Mahomet Achmet, who had publicly declared that he was the Mahdi foretold by Mahomet.

Further, that this sheikh had been for some time very busy in extending his influence among the tribes and notables by emissaries and letters, besides preaching that all who would not recognise him must perish by the sword. Reouf Pasha became somewhat alarmed, fearing the consequences which must result from such teaching among the credulous, ignorant, and superstitious people of the Soudan. He therefore decided to send a party to resist Mahomet Achmet, and investigate the matter. This party consisted of ten soldiers under the command of the Government officer of Kana. The orders were to take the Cadi of Kana, with some notables, to visit the Island of Abba, to ascertain what Mahomet Achmet was doing, and, should they consider it necessary, advise him to cease his intrigues and remain quiet. On the 3rd August, 1881, they reached Abba and had an interview with the Sheikh. The mission failed.

The Governor-General then ordered his aide-de-camp, Abre Saoud-el-Ghat, with some notables and learned men, to visit the Sheikh, order him to cease intrigues, and come to Khartoum. Again Mahomet Achmet refused this advice, and boldly declared that he was the Mahdi.

On the 11th August Abre Saoud returned to Khartoum. The same day he was again ordered by Reouf Pasha to return to Abba with two adjutant-majors, 200 regular soldiers, and one gun. His orders were to again try what he could effect through persuasion, but should that fail, to use force. At three a.m. on the 12th he reached Abba. A discussion arose between the two adjutant-majors, both claiming to be in command. The result was that the Mahdi and his followers, 4000 in number, turned out, attacked the party, and drove them back to the river. In this skirmish some 120 soldiers were killed, including the adjutant-major. The rest of

the expedition succeeded in reaching the steamer, and returned to Khartoum.

The Mahdi then sent emissaries to all the neighbouring chiefs, calling on them to join him.

After this failure Reouf Pasha organized a new expedition. The officer in command was Mahomet Pasha Saïd, from the regular army. Not finding the Mahdi at Abba, Mahomet Pasha Saïd followed him leisurely on to Talka. On arriving there the Pasha discovering that the Mahdi had retreated still further into the Jebel Nuba Group, and considering it useless to follow him, returned to Kordofan. The expedition was broken up and the soldiers returned to their several posts.

It is said that Mahomet Pasha Saïd could with ease have seized the Mahdi on several occasions. The Pasha reported that he avoided doing so, as he thought him to be the true Mahdi.

After the failure of the expedition and the retreat of the Mahdi into the Jebel Nuba Group, Reouf Pasha considered it was unnecessary to take any further active measures, and that the movement, if left alone, would collapse of itself owing to the sterile and inhospitable character of the mountains among which the Mahdi with his followers had taken refuge. Orders were accordingly given to suspend all further operations.

In December 1881, Reschid Bey, a Circassian, and the Mudir (Governor) of Fashoda, heard that the King of Tajalle (a district of the Jebel Nuba), who was but nominally subject to the Government, had driven out the Mahdi from his district, and that the Mahdi had taken refuge in the mountains of Gheddeer. Reschid Bey thereupon decided to attack the Mahdi in his new position. Taking with him 350 regulars and 70 irregulars he left Fashoda on the 4th December. On the morning of the 9th he reached Gheddeer after marching all night. Nearing

some wells, the soldiers, following their usual custom, broke their ranks and rushed to the water. They were immediately attacked by the Arabs, and nearly all killed, including the Mudir.

After this defeat the military and political situation became so serious that Reouf Pasha was compelled to ask for troops from Egypt, or to be allowed to take three battalions from the Abyssinian frontier. Both requests were at first denied by the Government, but eventually it was settled to allow one Negro battalion under Ibrahim Bey Fawzi to be got ready. By these delays and refusals most valuable time was lost, and the rebellion rapidly gathered head.

The Mahdi, seeing that he could defy the Government with impunity, was encouraged to believe in his mission, and the Baggara tribes began to join him. The various turbulent sects of dervishes throughout the country also became unsettled, and many began to think Mahomet Achmet might really be the true Mahdi. The Mahdi himself, though he did not venture to leave the shelter of his retreat in the Gheddeer hills, was busily engaged in fomenting the rebellion by emissaries, promises, and letters.

On the 4th of March, 1882, Reouf Pasha was recalled, and Abdel Kader Pasha appointed Governor-General. During the interval, which of necessity occurred between the departure of Reouf and the arrival of Abdel Kader, Giegler Pasha, a German, lately head of the Telegraphs of the Soudan, was named Wakil, or Deputy Governor. This official, reversing the inactive and waiting policy of his predecessor, telegraphed at once to Cairo that it was not necessary to send troops from Egypt, and that the force then in the Soudan was amply sufficient to put down the rebellion. After some hesitation the Egyptian Government allowed Giegler to act as he thought fit. On receiving this permission one

of the first measures of this officer was to form a new expedition as follows :—

From Khartoum.—Four companies of regulars, two guns, one rocket and 300 irregulars. The officer in command was Lieutenant-Colonel Mahomet Bey Suleiman.

From Kordofan.—Major Abdul Asily, with six companies of regulars, 581 Bashi-Bazouks, and 800 Bazingers, or Negroes belonging to the Kinfara and Mansabâst tribes.

From Senaar.—Two companies of regulars and 200 irregulars. Total from 3000 to 3500 men.

The orders were for the Khartoum troops to go by steamer, and the Kordofan troops by land, to Kaha, a station north of Fashoda on the White Nile. The Senaar troops to march on Gheddeer. The officer appointed to command the expedition was Nubir Yussef Pasha, a Berberine. Although brave, he was ignorant and commanded little, if any, respect. Of the Senaar detachment, the regulars and 200 of the Bashi-Bazouks reached Kana on the 20th or 21st March, and left immediately for Kaha. The remaining 100 Bashi-Bazouks arrived too late to leave with the others and remained, halted, at Kana. On the 22nd April all the detachments with the above exception were concentrated at Kaha.

In consequence of these movements the garrisons all over the country were left very weak, and at Senaar there were but 75 regulars and 33 irregulars. Perceiving this Amr-el Makashef, a prominent agent of the Mahdi's, collecting the disaffected in that district (Dervishes and Arabs) attacked Senaar, burnt and pillaged a part of the town, opened the prisons, murdered the strangers, and released the Arabs. Nine officers and 100 soldiers were killed. The garrison, however, succeeded in making good the defence of the Government House. The Mudir at once telegraphed to Khartoum for assist-

ance Giegler Pasha ordered Saleh Agha, an irregular officer, who with his force of 200 men had volunteered his services and had been sent on to Kana, to march on Senaar, taking with him the 100 remaining Bashi-Bazouks. Saleh Agha with his force of 300 men left Kana on the 7th April for Senaar, marching by a circuitous route, the direct one having been stopped by the rebels. On the 8th Amr-el Makashef renewed his assault, but was repulsed. He then surrounded the town. On the 13th Saleh Agha arrived, raised the blockade, and repulsed the rebels.

On the 15th Giegler Pasha left Khartoum by steamer for Senaar along with 300 irregulars. On reaching Masalemieh a large and important town south of Khartoum, and about 15 or 20 miles to the west of the Blue Nile, he was told there was a notable Sherif, Achmet Taha (nephew of the Mahdi), who resided in the village of Mahomet Ashera, a short distance east of Masalemieh, on the other side of the Nile. It was reported that this notable was an agent of the Mahdi's, and that he was intriguing to raise the Arabs of the district.

Giegler sent the Chief of the Bashi-Bazouks, Yussuf Agha-el-Malik, with some officers and fifty soldiers to the village. This expedition failed, and all the officers and most of the soldiers were killed.

Giegler then telegraphed orders to the officer at Galabat, on the Abyssinian frontier, to send him six companies of regulars and 100 irregular cavalry. Pending their arrival he went to Abu Haraz, on the Blue Nile. These troops under Suroor Effendi Bahid, with a gun, arrived at Abu Haraz about the 2nd of May. On the 4th the attack on Mahomet Ashera was renewed. This attack also failed with a loss of 210 officers and men and the gun.

On the 5th Giegler was joined by 2500 warriors of

the great Shukuri tribe, headed by their Prince, Auad-el-Kerim, with his six sons, his nephews, and a number of nobles clad in coats of mail and helmets of steel, and riding thoroughbred Arab horses as in the days of the Crusades. This was a grateful sight, for Auad-el-Kerim was a personal friend of the Vice-Governor, and had cast his lot with the Government. Encouraged by this accession of strength, the attack was again renewed on the 6th; this time it succeeded, and Mahomet Ashera was defeated with great slaughter.

After the victory the troops were directed on Senaar, and on the 24th or 25th of May an action occurred between them and a portion of the rebels at a village called Abuskok. Suroor Effendi Bahid formed his troops in line facing the wind. The result was that under cover of the smoke the Arabs crept close up to the line. Suroor Effendi Bahid then fled, and his troops retired, fleeing precipitately. Seeing that the action was being lost, Ali Rashif, the Governor of 'Senaar, rallied the troops, stopped Suroor's flight, and ordered the advance. They advanced, covered by Ali Rashif's irregular troops, and the rebels were driven into the river, with a loss of 800 men. The few who managed to cross the river were killed by the men of a friendly tribe. In this action nearly all the irregular troops (120) were killed. The remnant of the rebels retired on Tegu and joined Amr-el-Makashef and the main body.

Giegler now returned to Khartoum, leaving Saleh Agha in command of the troops.

On the 3rd of June four companies of regulars with irregulars again attacked the rebels under Amr-el-Makashef, at Tegu. The rebels were defeated and dispersed. Amr-el-Makashef fled across the White Nile by the ford of Abu Zed, and joined the Mahdi.

Some time after the rebels again collected under

Faki Sedi Habbi—it is said to the number of 10,000 or 12,000 (probably greatly exaggerated)—and took up a position at Eddi Binat, whence they threatened Marabieh on the White Nile. Abdel Kader thereupon collected a body of troops from the garrisons of Duem, Kana, and Marabieh, and giving the command to Zeyd Bey ordered him to advance against the rebels. About the 5th October these troops reached the neighbourhood of Eddi Binat. They were attacked by the rebels. The troops formed a hollow square, three sides of regulars and the fourth of Aburoff Arabs. The regulars repulsed the attack, but some 40 or 50 rebels got in on the fourth side. The result was a defeat with the loss of 800 men. The survivors fled to the White Nile, distant some twelve hours, and returned to their several stations. Although successful Sedi Habbi was unable to follow up his victory owing to his heavy losses.

On the 7th May news came that the rebels had attacked Fozia, station destroyed, and 31 of the 38 soldiers of the garrison killed.

On the 13th that the rebels had attacked Dileny ; attack repulsed ; some soldiers who were engaged in collecting taxes were killed.

On the 14th that a detachment of 400 regulars, 300 irregulars and 800 volunteers (slaves lent or given by merchants) from Kordofan under Bimbashi (Major) Nessim Effendi had twice attacked some rebels near Birket Roli, south of Obeid ; losses 700 rebels and 53 soldiers ; rebels defeated. Notwithstanding this victory, the arms and ammunition appear to have been lost.

On the 23rd, that 3000 rebels and 250 horsemen had surrounded Taizairor, east of Obeid ; that the village had been burnt and merchants killed and others wounded.

On the 26th, that the Homar tribe of Arabs had attacked Omchanga in Darfoor and killed four merchants.

On the 31st, that Taigarrah had been again attacked.

On the 3rd June, that a detachment had left Bara for Akshaf and had beaten the rebels.

On the 6th, that two companies of regulars, 100 irregulars, and 600 volunteers, with one gun, had attacked Had-el-Hadoa near Kordofan, and killed 300 rebels.*

In April, as already stated, the Gheddeer field force of 6000 men was fully concentrated at Kaha on the White Nile. From there it was Nubir Yussef Pasha's original intention to advance directly on Gheddeer. However, he learned on inquiry that the road was difficult and water scarce. He determined to bring on the expedition to Fashoda on the 22nd. Here they halted till the 20th May, when they again left for Jebel Tunger, a station situated on the road between Fashoda and Gheddeer. Here they made another unaccountable halt till the 21st. By these successive halts they allowed themselves to be overtaken by the rainy season, which in that latitude begins about the first fortnight in May. On the 21st May they began their final advance on Gheddeer through a very marshy and wooded country. On the 7th June a battle was fought and resulted in their total defeat, annihilation, and loss of large stores of ammunition.

This crushing blow rendered the position of affairs exceedingly critical. Practically the Government was left defenceless in face of a general insurrection. There were no available troops to take the field, no help could be expected from Egypt, and the garrisons were everywhere weak and demoralised. Fortunately the Mahdi, instead of following up his success and marching on Obeid

* The returns relating to all these engagements being from Egyptian sources must be received with caution.

or Khartoum, remained inactive at Gheddeer, thus giving Abdel Kader time to organize new means of resistance. This officer began by calling up three regular battalions and a number of Bashi-Bazouks from the Gallabâat, Tenleit, and Girsch garrisons, altogether about 3500 men. He then formed two battalions of Negroes from slaves voluntarily given to the Government by the merchants and notables of Bieber, Dongola, Khartoum, &c. He also collected some 8000 to 9000 Bashi-Bazouks. A thousand recruits who arrived opportunely from the Bahr Gazelle were also formed into a battalion. Khartoum, Senaar, Obeid, Bara, Kana, Duem, Tura Kadra, and Fashoda, were also put in a state of defence. As soon as the troops were somewhat organized a considerable number of them were directed on Kordofan, Tura Kadra, Duem, Senaar, Ghedariff, and Dugola, to reinforce the weak garrisons in those places. While the Governor-General was thus employed, and the Mahdi was resting at Gheddeer, his lieutenants were active all over the country.

On the 8th June an officer and 90 men left Kordofan to attack a party of rebels under Sheikh-el-Kerissat who were in the neighbourhood. The rebels were defeated, losing 372 men. Subsequently the rebels collected again at the Reka and attacked the volunteers. They were again defeated with a loss of 47 men.

On the 24th June the rebels under Mahomet Zamani, a minister of the Mahdi, attacked Bara. They were repulsed with a loss of 2980 killed and wounded.

From Bara an expedition was then sent to attack the Hamar Arabs stationed on the Darfur frontier between Obeid and Omschanga. On the 17th July this expedition was attacked. The rebels were defeated with a loss of 1120 killed and wounded. Although victorious, the expedition was recalled to Obeid to strengthen that

garrison, news having come in that the Mahdi had broken up his camp at Gheddeer and was marching on Obeid.

On some date between the 15th and 31st July 1000 regulars and irregulars of Darfour, under Adjutant Major Sagh Kola Aghani Mansur Effendi marched on Shaha to attack the Ozham free tribes, who had rebelled. This expedition was totally defeated, only the Adjutant-Major and six men escaping.

On the 13th July a number of irregulars under Sheikh Madein Agha Shambre left Kana for Shatt to attack the rebels. The detachment was made up of 100 Bashi-Bazouks with a few regulars. The troops were defeated and all killed. On the 18th July the rebel Faki Manna attacked Taigaira, and was repulsed with a loss of 317 men. 6th August.—The rebels again attacked Taigaira. They were at first repulsed and pursued by the garrison. During the pursuit another body of rebels entered the deserted part—the result was the surrender of the garrison (1000 men) with arms and ammunition. 8th August.—A large body of rebels under Waled-el-Makashef attacked Shatt some two hours from Duem, carried the post, slaughtered the garrison (200 men) and a number of women.

On the 23rd they proceeded to attack Duem, but were repulsed with a loss of 4500 men.

Returning now to the operations of the main body of insurgents under the Mahdi. After his victory at Gheddeer, directing his march on Obeid, he reached that town on the 3rd September, and immediately ordered the garrison of 6000 men to surrender. The direct effect of this summons was to induce most of the townspeople to rally to him, and the garrison, abandoning a large part of the town, entrenched themselves about the Government House. Here they were attacked on the morning

of the 14th,* the assault lasting from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. The Mahdi was repulsed. On each of the two succeeding days he renewed his assault, but always with the same result. In this attack he is said to have lost 10,000 men, not counting the wounded. The loss of the garrison was 104 regulars and 184 irregulars. After this repulse the Mahdi determined to block Obeid and Bara.

In consequence of the call for reinforcements for the garrisons of Obeid and Bara, a relief expedition of two regular battalions and 750 Bashi-Bazouks, under Ali Bey Sutfi, was organized. On the 24th September the expedition left Duem for Bara. After two days' march they reached Abrisbok, where they found the wells filled up; they then went on to Helawan, where also they found no water. They were then attacked by the rebels. Instead of waiting for the assault, Ali Bey Sutfi took the offensive with four companies of Bashi-Bazouks. The rebels were repulsed with a loss of 1700 men; the next day the troops reached Umzoza, where they also found no water. They then pushed on to Doma. On the 6th they reached Kan. Here there was a well in the midst of a very thick forest. The soldiers, after making a very weak 'zeriba,' rushed according to their usual custom, to the wells. They were at once attacked by the rebels and 1127 killed, including most of the officers. The remainder managed to reach Bara on the 3rd October. Several skirmishes occurred on the road, but with no great loss.

On the 4th October, six hours north of Gebel Ain, the Marabuzeh garrison had an engagement with some rebels, in which they lost 355 regulars and 460 Bashi-Bazouks.

9th October.—The rebels attacked Bara, but were

* According to some accounts the assaults took place on the 4th, 5th, and 6th September.

repulsed. 10th October.—Repeated the attack : similar result. 7th November.—The Chief of the Gallabat with his tribe attacked the rebels and killed 236, loss seven dead and five wounded. 10th November.—The Mahdi, to prevent assistance being sent to the blockaded garrisons of Kordofan and Bara, directed Sheikh Abdul Bassit to cross the White Nile and stir up the embers of the rebellion in that district. This leader advanced close to Duem with a body of 400 men. Here he expected to be joined by a number of adherents. 10th November.—Giegler, who had been at Duem for some time, directed an expedition of 225 picked men to be sent against him. On the 11th the rebels were attacked, defeated, and Abdul Bassit taken. He was sent into Khartoum and hung.

The foregoing brings the narrative of events down to the time of the receipt of Abdel Kader's pressing demand for reinforcements.

At this period the relief expedition under Ali Bey Sutfi had been all but annihilated. Obeid was held by 3500 men, and Bara by 2000. Both garrisons were badly off for food and in a depressed condition. Some of the irregular officers with their men had deserted to the Mahdi, who with the bulk of his forces was encamped round Bara. Amr-el-Makashef was at the same time operating on the Nile.

The latest reports from Darfour were six months old, and the Governor then stated that the southern portion of the province was disaffected, and that he could not be responsible for the maintenance of order unless a battalion of troops was sent to strengthen him.

CHAPTER II.

OPERATIONS AGAINST THE MAHDI.

The Situation in the Soudan—The British Government disclaims Responsibility—Arabi's Old Troops Re-enlisted—The New Force ordered to Duem—Abdel Kader demands European Officers—Operations ordered to be suspended—Surrender of Bara—Capitulation of El Obeid—Kordofan in the Hands of the Rebels—Re-occupation of Senaar—Abdel Kader superseded—Al-ed-Din Pasha proclaimed Governor-General of the Soudan.

THE situation, it must be admitted, was critical enough. The question arose, what was to be done?

On the 7th November, 1882, Lord Granville caused the Khedive to be informed that the British Government were unwilling to take any responsibility in regard to the Soudan. Left to their own resources the Egyptian Government decided to re-enlist about 10,000 of Arabi's old officers and men for service in the Soudan.

The Khedive had, in fact, no alternative. The step had, at all events, one advantage, viz., that of removing from Lower Egypt a large number of disbanded soldiers who might otherwise be an element of a disturbing character.

Early in November 3000 soldiers were got together from the villages and concentrated at the 'Barrage,' near Cairo. Most of them had to be brought in chains. Desertions from the force were very frequent, a rumour having got abroad that the men were to be transported to the Soudan as prisoners. The arms and ammunition had to be transported to Souakim separately from the troops as a measure of precaution. By the 12th December 5000 of the new levies had been sent to Berber *viâ* Souakim. A month later the total number

which had been collected at the Barrage had reached 9500, of whom 7700 had been despatched to the seat of war. In February the last of the recruits left Lower Egypt.

Most of these troops were deplorably ignorant of all notions of drill and handling their rifles, and were little, if at all, better than an armed mob. The officers were no better. Many of them had been engaged in the recent operations in Egypt, which did not tend to increase their military spirit. Others looked on service in the Soudan as a sentence of death, and deemed that the Khedive's purpose in sending them was to get finally rid of them.

Considering also the superstitious notions which most of them had of the power and invincibility of the Mahdi, and of the desperate courage of the rebels, it will be admitted that such men were hardly the class of troops to inspire confidence, and that to advance with such a rabble against the enemy was but to court defeat.

It was evident that the first thing to do was to try to teach them something. They were, therefore, at once isolated from the town, in a camp on the western bank of the Nile. Here the Governor-General devoted himself to personally giving them instruction by drilling them, teaching them to fire, and lecturing the officers.

After the defeat and death of Abdul Bassit on the 11th November, the Mahdi sent Amr-el-Makashef, the brother of Walid-el-Makashef, to the east bank of the White Nile. This leader succeeded in collecting a following, with which he threatened the Duem garrison. These telegraphed to Khartoum for assistance. A battalion of the newly-arrived Egyptians was sent under Giegler. On arriving at Shasmoul, three or four hours south of Duem, it was reported that the rebels to the number of some 2000 men were at Ghuma, a village seven hours south

of Shawaal, and some forty from the river on the east bank. The battalion, together with 180 men of the Duem garrison, was therefore ordered to march on Aber Yhama by Marabieh. The battalion officers, however, pointed out that instead of marching it would be less fatiguing to go by steamer to a village called Manferned Zemba, disembark, and then advance and attack. Instead of doing this the Bimbashi officers began making a variety of objections. The result was that the expedition returned to Shawaal, having effected nothing.

Owing to this lamentable failure Abdel Kader judged it expedient to telegraph to the Khedive requesting that the services of some European officers might be placed at his disposal.

When the British Government formally disclaimed all interest in the Soudan they nevertheless went so far as to assent, on the recommendation of Sir Archibald Alison, to the despatch thither of Colonel D. H. Stewart, of the 11th Hussars, Captain Kelham, and Lieutenant Wood. These officers were instructed to obtain information respecting the route from Souakim to Berber and Khartoum, and the possibility of placing the latter town in a proper state of defence.

On the 16th December Colonel Stewart arrived at Khartoum. He found that place quiet. Obeid and Bara were still holding out unrelieved, Abdel Kader demanding seven additional battalions before he could advance to their assistance.

A fresh outbreak in the vicinity of Kawa, 150 miles up the White Nile, compelled the Governor-General of the Soudan to send two battalions of the first reliefs from Egypt to assist in restoring order on the banks of the Blue and White Niles.

Amr-el-Makashef with a large force threatening

Senaar from Sibel, four companies of the Senaar garrison marched for the last-named place. On the road they were attacked by the rebels, and all but eighty surrendered to the Mahdi.

At the end of December Colonel Stewart reported that things were better in Kordofan. Food was required immediately for Bara. The province of Darfour was quiet, but the Mahdi was said to be going to march in that direction after conquering Kordofan. A second Mahdi had lately appeared, but had been hung by order of the first.

Early in January news was received of a fresh disaster on the eastern bank of the White Nile, whither a detachment of 190 men had been despatched to repair the telegraph line to Khartoum. The force was attacked not far from the fort of Jura Hadra, and formed square. The square was broken and many of them were killed. About half of the party managed to rally and were saved by reinforcements sent from Jura Hadra.

Abdel Kader, on the 2nd January, 1883, left Khartoum to take command of the troops operating between the White and Blue Niles. His intention was to clear the province of Senaar. He was joined at Messalamieh by some irregular troops under Salihah Bey, and started for Abut with these and one Egyptian battalion. The notables and fakirs he found very friendly, and the inhabitants supplied the troops with water and even bread. As the force advanced, a portion of the country was found deserted, all the villagers having gone to join the Mahdi. At Abut, Abdel Kader determined to await the arrival of another battalion which he had sent for from Shawal. In the meantime the Hassaniyeh nomads on the White Nile were giving trouble. To restore order in that district the 1st battalion of the 2nd Regiment left Khartoum on the 16th January in two steamers.

When near the village where operations were to commence, one steamer ran aground. The other went on, landed three companies and opened fire on some rebels, then about 2000 yards off. Three or four of the rebel horsemen falling upon the two companies which had last disembarked and which was not yet formed up, was the signal for a general flight of the Egyptian force to the river. The Bimbashi in command was killed by his own men in the confusion.

When the other steamer with the remainder of the force came up, a council of war was held, and it was decided that, without reinforcements from Khartoum, the battalion was not strong enough to advance against the enemy, though their force was really only 400 men. The expedition did nothing further till the 26th, when another Bimbashi arrived to replace the one who had been killed. He ordered an advance on the village at daybreak. The other officers remonstrated, saying that if they marched in the dark through an unknown country they would all be killed. On the Bimbashi remaining firm, five of the officers went on the sick list. The advance was made in the square formation preceded by an advance guard and scouts. A narrow strip of forest lay between the Egyptian force and the village. Two companies were ordered into the forest to reconnoitre the road leading to the village; the officers, however, refused to advance, saying that they and their men would certainly be killed. Some soldiers at this time firing off their rifles contrary to orders, gave the alarm to the rebels, who advanced through the wood. The Egyptian force then fell back on their boats, and nothing more was done.

The foregoing account gives a fair idea of the fighting capacity of the Egyptian officers and men. The truth of the matter seems to have dawned on the autho-

rities in Cairo about this period, for on the 23rd January a telegram from the Khedive to Hussein Pasha Serri, known as Hussein Pasha, the senior military officer at Khartoum, ordered all operations to be suspended, and all the troops to be concentrated there, pending the arrival of English staff-officers from Cairo.

The orders of the Khedive were communicated to Abdel Kader, who, nevertheless, declined to obey. The reason he gave was that by withdrawing the troops, as desired, the rebellion would be allowed to extend in the eastern provinces, and that if the expedition did not leave promptly for Kordofan, that province, as well as Darfour, would be lost to Egypt.

It is quite possible, also, that Abdel Kader, who was undoubtedly an able leader, was disinclined to allow the work to be taken out of his hands. In any case he did not for a moment relax his efforts. On the 27th he defeated the rebels at Maatuk with a loss of 600 killed and wounded. He directed a successful engagement at Baatuk on the road to Kawa. On the 1st February he reached Kawa, where he was joined by the battalion ordered up from Shawal, and two days later by two other battalions from Karash. He then left for Khartoum by steamer, giving directions for the disposal of the force in his absence.

On the 11th February a messenger brought news to Khartoum that Bara had surrendered to the Mahdi on the 5th January.

Four days later, intelligence was received of the capitulation of Iskander Bey at El Obeid on 17th January. According to the details received, it would appear that on the 16th or 17th of January negotiations were opened and a meeting of delegates on either side was appointed for next day. On this becoming known, a considerable portion of the troops at once left and joined

the rebels. The next day the rebels made an attack in force. The Bey in command ordered the soldiers to resist, but they refused and went over to the enemy; the artillery fired in the air, and the Commandant, taking this as a sign of collusion with the rebels, made an unconditional surrender. The Mahdi was about four miles distant from Obeid at the time this happened; he came into the town, spared the lives of all, but took all the money in the treasury, said to amount to 12,000 dollars. The Mudir and the Bey commanding the troops were interned at some distance from the town.

The capture of these two strongholds placed the whole of Kordofan in the hands of the Mahdi, who also obtained possession of 5500 prisoners, 6000 Remington rifles, and five guns.

On the 13th February at Wad-el-Medinet Abdel Kader rejoined the troops he had left at Kawa. He proceeded thence towards Senaar with three battalions and about 600 Bashi-Bazouks.

The Mahdi, on the approach of Abdel Kader, withdrew from Senaar, and advanced to meet him with a force estimated at from 10,000 to 12,000 men. These, under the command of Amr Makashef, attacked the Egyptian force on the 24th, but, after a fight lasting three hours, were repulsed, with a loss stated at 2000 in killed alone.

After this, Senaar was occupied without resistance, and communications were re-established between that place and Khartoum.

Al-ed-Din Pasha, a Turkish cavalry officer, and Suleiman Nyasi (known as Suleiman Pasha), arrived at Khartoum on the 20th February. The former was sent to supersede Abdel Kader, and the latter to take command of the army.

On the 26th March Al-ed-Din Pasha was publicly proclaimed Governor-General of the Soudan.

CHAPTER III.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE.

Note to the Powers—Their Replies—Relations with Turkey—The Abolition of the Control—Protest of France—Sir A. Colvin appointed Financial Adviser.

THE future relations between England and Egypt, and the question of the neutralisation of the Suez Canal, now engaged the attention of Mr. Gladstone's Administration.

On the 3rd January, 1883, Lord Granville issued a Circular Note to the Powers on the Egyptian question.

In it, Lord Granville recalled the fact that events compelled Her Majesty's Government to undertake the task of repressing the Egyptian rebellion, a task which England would have willingly shared with other Powers. The British Government, his Lordship said, wished to withdraw its troops as soon as a system capable of protecting the authority of the Khedive should be organized. In the meantime he considered it a duty to give the Khedive all the advice which might lead to a satisfactory situation.

Lord Granville further declared that the danger which threatened the Suez Canal during Arabi's revolt, its occupation by British troops in the name of the Khedive, its employment as a base of operations against the rebels, as well as the attitude of the Canal Company at a critical moment in the campaign, constituted strong reasons for seeking an international settlement of this question, in order to avoid similar dangers in the future.

Her Majesty's Government thought that free navigation on the Canal, and its protection against damage and obstruction resulting from military operations, were questions of general interest. It considered its action in the war as being in conformity with the general principle of the maintenance of the liberty and inviolability of the Canal; and in order to guarantee itself against any possible false interpretation, it defined clearly the conditions in which the Canal must be found in future. His Lordship, in consequence, proposed to the Powers to come to a common understanding to ensure the freedom of passage through the Canal for every description of vessel, under all circumstances, with this reserve in the event of war, that the ships of war belonging to one of the belligerent nations which might be in the Canal while hostilities were proceeding could disembark neither troops nor warlike munitions.

Further, no act of hostility would be permitted even to Turkey, if she were one of the belligerents. In case of events such as the late rebellion occurring again, a special clause would stipulate the necessary measures for the defence of Egypt. Each Power would further be obliged to bear the expense of the immediate repairs in the Canal which might be necessary in consequence of damage done by its ships of war.

Egypt would have to take the necessary steps to ensure the execution of the conditions imposed on ships of belligerent nations. No fortifications could be established on the Canal or in its immediate neighbourhood.

As regards financial arrangements, Her Majesty's Government thought it possible to arrange for greater economy and greater simplicity in the Daira Administration by modifications which will not in any way diminish the guarantees of the creditors. His Lordship hoped that he would soon be able to submit definite proposals

on this subject to the Powers. The Government relied on the co-operation of the Powers to place foreigners on the same footing as natives as regards taxation. Lord Granville then referred to the prolongation of the Mixed Tribunals. He said that, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the Egyptian army should be small, and the maintenance of order entrusted to a distinct body of gendarmerie and police.

In conclusion, his Lordship said that Her Majesty's Government had yielded to the strong wish expressed by the Khedive and his Ministers to see some of the highest appointments in the army conferred on British officers.

The published papers contain no reply or acknowledgment of the communication on the part of the French Government.

The first of the other Powers to express any opinion on the despatch was Austria. Sir Henry Elliot called on Count Kalnoky on the 16th of January to ask what impression had been made upon him by the document ; and his reply was to the effect that, though he could not be expected to pronounce upon it off-hand, he would repeat assurances already given that his Government continued to be animated by the most sincere wish not to embarrass Her Majesty's Government in the re-organization of the administration of Egypt. A week later the Austrian Foreign Minister had another interview with the English Ambassador, and the conversation left on Sir Henry Elliot's mind the impression that Count Kalnoky would make no observations upon the circular despatch except with reference to the proposal to subject Europeans to the same taxation as natives. He admitted the justice of this proposal, and Sir Henry believed he would not object to it ; but it was, he said a subject that required full examination before it

was decided. The suggestions of Her Majesty's Government about the Suez Canal appeared quite to satisfy him.

On the 25th, Count Herbert Bismarck, the German *chargé d'affaires* in London, called on Lord Granville, and stated that his Government accepted generally the arrangement regarding Egypt and the Suez Canal proposed in the despatch, and was prepared to await the further information promised respecting the internal reorganization of Egypt. He went on to say that the German Government would continue to preserve the same friendly attitude towards Her Majesty's Government in regard to Egyptian affairs which they had maintained during the summer. Upon this communication Lord Granville remarks, in a despatch to Lord Ampthill:—'I have expressed to Count Bismarck the satisfaction which Her Majesty's Government will feel at this communication, and have told him that I am fully sensible of the great assistance which has been afforded to us in the discharge of very onerous duties by the friendly attitude of the German Government.'

On the 24th January, Count Hatzfeldt informed Lord Ampthill that he was about to instruct Count Herbert Bismarck to inform Lord Granville that the German Government accepted and agreed in principle to the policy laid down in the Circular of the 3rd respecting the reorganization of Egypt, but that he must await the opinion of the other Powers concerned before he could undertake to enter upon a more detailed discussion of the measures proposed.

The Italian Government took much longer time before giving any answer. It was not till the 7th February that Count Nigra called on Lord Granville to state their opinion. It was to the effect that they wished to reserve any detailed expression of their views till the English proposals were communicated in a more

definite shape; but he was able to say at once that they concurred generally in those proposals. Signor Mancini had in the meantime asked for a report from the Italian agent in Egypt, in order to be able to form an opinion on the subject of the taxation of foreigners.

The Russian reply was yet later, and very indefinite. Sir Edward Thornton asked M. de Giers on the 7th February what he had to say, and the reply was that the Imperial Government considered the views expressed in the circular despatch as 'generally satisfactory,' and they 'had not for the present any objection to make to them.' A day or two later, M. de Giers was dining at the English Embassy in St. Petersburg, and he then took occasion to express his fear that there might be some delay in consequence of the recent death of the Russian Agent and Consul-General at Alexandria, which might retard his reception of certain reports which he had asked for.

The minor Powers were addressed in a Circular dated the 24th January, and enclosing Lord Granville's despatch of the 3rd. The respective Foreign Ministers were informed that, as their Governments were interested in the condition of Egypt, and in the questions relating to the Suez Canal, Her Majesty's Government had thought that it might be agreeable to them 'to have cognizance of the communication which has been made by Great Britain on these subjects to the Porte and the other Powers represented in the recent Conference at Constantinople.'

The Spanish Government were somewhat effusive in their thanks. The Minister for Foreign Affairs promised to lose no time in expressing the opinion of his colleagues, and in the meantime desired to say how much gratified was King Alfonso's Government at the courtesy and consideration shown towards Spain.

The Portuguese Government simply expressed their thanks.

In a despatch to Mr. Wyndham requesting him to lay the Circular before the Porte, Lord Granville wrote as follows :—

‘ Having regard to the exceptional position occupied by Turkey in relation to this important question, and to the special interests of His Majesty the Sultan which are involved in its solution, Her Majesty’s Government desire, in the first place, to address the Sublime Porte separately on the subject; and they conceive that they could hardly adopt a more convenient and satisfactory mode of placing their views before the Sultan than by communicating to His Majesty a copy of the Circular which they propose to address to the Powers, and which resumes all that they have to state on the subject at the present time. You will accordingly deliver a copy of this despatch and of its enclosure to the Porte, and, in doing so, you will express the hope of Her Majesty’s Government that His Majesty the Sultan will recognise the friendly sentiments which have prompted them to submit separately to the appreciation of the Porte their proposals with reference to Egypt, and that these proposals will commend themselves to the favourable opinion of His Majesty, as the result of the most anxious consideration on the part of Her Majesty’s Government, and as embodying a system of reorganization in Egypt which, in their opinion, is best calculated to insure the stability of its institutions, the prosperity and happiness of its people, and the peace of Europe in the East and of the Ottoman dominions.’

On the 17th October Saïd Pasha had proposed to Lord Dufferin to open negotiations with regard to Egypt with a view to the maintenance of what he termed the *status quo ante*, and expressed the gratitude of the Turkish Government for the assurance of England’s intention not to leave the English troops long in Egypt.

Lord Dufferin was instructed to say in reply that as the affairs of Egypt had advanced only partially towards their final settlement, any negotiation would be premature.

On the 23rd December Musurus Pasha asked Lord Granville for a reply as to the period of the occupation by the British troops. Lord Granville answered that he could not fix the exact date, but hoped to be in a short time able to make a communication to the Porte on the

whole Egyptian question. This communication was the Circular Note of the 3rd January, 1883.

On the 25th January Mr. Wyndham asked the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs if he could tell him what impression the proposals of Her Majesty's Government with regard to Egypt had made upon the Ottoman Government. Aarifi Pasha said that the different points presented had been examined by the Ministers, but that they had not yet come to a final decision as to what answer they should return.

One of the first results of the new position adopted by England in Egypt was the abolition of the Dual Control.

As has been already shown, the institution had rendered great services to Egypt and tended to protect the humbler classes of natives from exaction and injustice. That it should have been so successful in its mission was due to the high character and administrative ability of the gentlemen selected for the duties of Controller-General. Major Baring found a worthy successor in Sir Auckland Colvin, and both in turn worked in the utmost harmony with their French colleague, M. de Blignières, afterwards succeeded by M. Brédif, who displayed the same courtesy in his relations with his English colleague.

The objections to the Control were summarised in a Note addressed by the Egyptian Government to the two Western Powers on the 7th November, 1882. But apart from any other objection to the Control, there was also a latent dread that circumstances might occur which would render that institution a danger to the maintenance of cordial relations between England and France. Its maintenance, moreover, was obviously incompatible with the exclusive predominance of England in Egypt.

Long previous to the presentation of this Note of the

7th November Cherif Pasha had been in communication with the English Government on the subject of the abolition of the Control, and it was not until it had been ascertained that the Note would be acceptable to England that it was presented.

Lord Dufferin, on the 28th December, was accordingly instructed to reply, on behalf of England, 'that Her Majesty's Government were not prepared, in opposition to the wishes of the Egyptian Government, and in face of the many objections which had been raised to the continuance of the Control, to insist on the maintenance of an arrangement which, in its last form, was only provisionally accorded. They thought, however, that for the present it would not be wise on the part of the Egyptian Government to deprive themselves of all European assistance in securing the good administration of the finances, on which must depend the prosperity and credit of the country, and its power to fulfil its international engagements without undue pressure on the Egyptian people. Her Majesty's Government would recommend that, in place of the Control, His Highness the Khedive should appoint a single European financial adviser. This officer would attend Cabinet Councils, but not as a Finance Minister, and would exercise powers of inquiry, and give advice on financial questions, but without any authority to interfere in the direct administration of the country.'

The despatch continued that 'Her Majesty's Government were aware of the great value which the French Government had attached in the past to the Dual Control. They did not deny the practical advantages which for a time attended the system—advantages which were owing to the common wish of this country and of France to promote the prosperity of Egypt; but they were convinced that this feeling on the part of France

would not extend to thinking it possible that an arrangement of a temporary character should be continued after two of the three parties to it had become desirous to be freed from the obligation for reasons which they considered to be of grave importance.'

It was scarcely to be expected that France would accept the arrangement, at all events, without a struggle, and M. Raindre, the French Consul-General in Cairo, was instructed to deny the right of the Egyptian Government to annul the existing arrangement.

This in no way altered the programme of Cherif Pasha, who, assured of the support of England, proceeded with the measure; and on the 18th January, 1883, a Decree was issued, stating that the dispositions of the Decree of the 18th November, 1876, and the Decrees of the 4th September, and the 15th November, 1879, relative to the Control, were repealed.

The next day the Decree was published in the *Moniteur Egyptien*, and the Control became a thing of the past.

On the Decree appearing in print, the French Consul-General addressed a long despatch to Cherif Pasha, in which the former stated that his Government declined to recognise the right of the Egyptian Government to upset an arrangement which he maintained was part of an agreement between the French and the Egyptian Governments, and which, he said, formed an essential security for French interests. The despatch concluded with a formal reservation of the rights of the French Government.

The abolition of the Control excited a burst of indignation from the French Press, the action of the Egyptian Government was loudly condemned, and there the matter ended.

M. Brédif, the French Controller, obtained leave of absence; and on the 5th February Sir Auckland Colvin, who, in the meantime, had resigned his post as English Controller, was appointed to the post of 'Financial Adviser,' created as a substitute for the defunct Control.

The Financial Adviser, without having the attributes of a Minister, was to attend the sittings of the Council of Ministers whenever invited. He was to have the power of examining into all financial questions, and to give his opinions upon them within limits to be laid down by the Khedive and his Ministers. The difference between the functions of the old Control and the new Financial Adviser was very great, and but for the fact that Egypt and her affairs were now under the tutelage of England the protection afforded to the bondholders by the new arrangement would have been but small.

CHAPTER IV.

REFORMS IN EGYPT.

Reorganization of Army and Police—Lord Dufferin's Report on Reforms in general, his Conclusions—Reform of Native Tribunals—The Commission of Indemnities—Proposed Withdrawal of Army of Occupation—Petition to Lord Dufferin—General Stephenson appointed to command—Lord Dufferin's Departure.

ONE of the first measures which had to be considered by Lord Dufferin was the reorganization of the Egyptian army. The rebellion and the measures taken in consequence had left Egypt absolutely without any army either to defend her frontiers or to maintain order in the interior. If, as was then contemplated, the British forces were ever to be withdrawn, it was necessary to provide others to take their place.

Lord Dufferin, in a despatch to the Foreign Office on the 18th November, 1882, combated the oft-repeated statement that Egypt required no army. According to him 'this was a mistake, for although an efficient gendarmerie might be able in ordinary times to prevent the Bedouins causing trouble along the desert border and the banks of the Suez Canal, it was essential that these unruly Arab communities should know that the Government held in reserve a military force capable of checking any serious attempt on their part to disturb the peace of the country; otherwise they would not hesitate to break through the necessarily sparse and feeble frontier guards in the hope of plundering Cairo.' Lord Dufferin estimated that the strength of the army ought not to exceed from 5000 to 6000 men.

On the question of officering the new force, he observed that the officering of the native army had always been its weak point. The fellah subaltern, captain, or colonel, had seldom been able to acquire the prestige or authority necessary for maintaining discipline during peace and for effective leading in the presence of the enemy. To meet the difficulty Lord Dufferin approved a proposal which he found under consideration for introducing into the Egyptian army a certain proportion of British officers. It was also suggested that an English General should be appointed to the chief command.

Both schemes were approved, and a number of officers were selected from the English army to fill certain grades in the Egyptian forces; and on the 13th December Sir Evelyn Wood left England to take the command with the title of Sirdar (Commander-in-Chief).

The reorganization of the gendarmerie and police was at the same time proceeded with. In a despatch, dated the 1st January, 1883, Lord Dufferin said on the subject of the gendarmerie that, 'in consequence of the proximity of the desert and the necessity of controlling the wild Arab tribes that infest its borders, it was desirable that this arm of the service should be in a great measure a mounted force, and impressed with a semi-military character. At the same time, for economical and other reasons, it should be also trained to discharge the civil duties of a rural police. Under certain aspects, therefore, it would possess the characteristics and qualifications of mounted infantry, and under others those of simple constabulary.'

The total number of the gendarmerie for 1883 was to be 4400 men with 2562 horses. Of the foregoing total, 1350 gendarmes were to be placed under the com-

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The total number of the gendarmerie for 1883 was to be 4400 men with 2562 horses. Of the foregoing total, 1350 gendarmes were to be placed under the com-

mand of the Commandant of the Urban police ; 850 stationed at Cairo, and 500 at Alexandria, who would assist in the performance of the police duties of those two towns. It may be observed that an arrangement of this kind had always prevailed in Egypt, and as the gendarmerie was a much cheaper force than the police a considerable saving would thus be effected.

The duties of the provincial gendarmerie were to be discharged by 1800 constables, of whom 1692 would be mounted, and 108 unmounted, to be distributed up and down the country, the larger subdivisions being located at those points where the caravan tracks across the desert entered Egypt, and in such other localities as were exposed to annoyance from the Bedouins. There was to be, in addition, a reserve of two battalions of 500 constables, one mounted and the other unmounted, retained at Cairo with the view of reinforcing any of the outposts where the local force might prove unequal to meet a sudden emergency.

The Executive Commandant of the Gendarmerie force was to be a European with the rank of Major-General, assisted by a European Deputy Commandant and two Staff Officers ; all the other officers were to be Egyptian with the exception of the head-officer of the Gendarmerie School of Instruction, and four officers in each of the reserve battalions. The total number of Europeans in the whole force of 4400 men was to be eighteen. The administration of the gendarmerie was to be placed under the Minister of the Interior. Its chief was to be General Baker, with the title of Inspector-General. He was to be assisted by a Deputy Inspector-General who would discharge his duties in the event of illness or absence. The Head-quarter Staff was to consist of one European orderly officer, and four Egyptian Staff officers.

Under the heading 'Urban Police,' Lord Dufferin's despatch said:—'The reorganization of the Urban police has been a more difficult and less satisfactory task than that of constituting the gendarmerie. In consequence of the terrible events at Alexandria, and the natural panic which ensued amongst the European population, the Egyptian Government was compelled the moment it was enabled by our victory at Tel-el-Kebir to resume the reins of power, to improvise a police force for Alexandria and Cairo under very embarrassing conditions. The measures adopted were consequently precipitate and ill-considered. A quantity of Albanians and Turks were hastily collected by Egyptian Agents wherever they could be found, and a considerable number of Europeans was also summoned to Alexandria without due regard being paid either to their antecedents or to their fitness for the duties they were called upon to discharge. The Turks and Albanians came mostly from the rural districts of Anatolia, and from the mountain villages of Epirus. They not only did not know the language, but most of them were quite uncivilised, and had never seen the streets of a city. It was at once evident that these persons were unfitted to discharge the duties of policemen. On the other hand, the native populations of the towns where they were to exercise their functions regarded with terror the arrival of such uncouth guardians of the peace, and imagined that the new *régime* was about to be maintained by a brutal force of foreign janissaries. Sir E. Malet and Lord Dufferin, as soon as they knew what had happened, instructed Count della Sala, who had been placed in temporary charge of the Urban police, to apply to the situation thus created whatever remedy the circumstances of the case permitted; and by his exertions not only was a stop put to the further inroad

of these foreigners, but a considerable proportion of them were sent back to their homes. Five hundred of the Albanians had gone to the Soudan, and the Government had promised to get rid of the remainder without loss of time, as their presence at Alexandria was both a nuisance and a danger.'

The total number of the Urban police of Cairo, Alexandria, Ismailia, and Port Saïd for 1883, was to be 1840, viz.:—

At Alexandria	.	.	.	823
Cairo	.	.	.	797
Ismailia and Port Saïd	.			220
Total				1840

At each of these places the following proportion of the constables were to be Europeans, viz.:—

At Alexandria	.	.	.	366
Cairo	.	.	.	220
Port Saïd and Ismailia	.			110

The command of the Urban police was in the hands of a Police Commandant. The officer selected for this post was to be Count della Sala, formerly at the head of the Anti-slavery Police. The Senior Executive officers at Cairo, Alexandria, Port Saïd, and Ismailia, were also Europeans.

Lord Dufferin next took in hand the question of the reform of Egyptian institutions generally. On the 6th February his Lordship made his report in the form of a lengthy despatch to Lord Granville, in which he dealt with the occupation of Egypt, and the responsibilities thereby devolving on England, and made various suggestions relative to Turkish rule, the native Tribunals, canalisation and irrigation, the Daira and Domains, the cadastral survey of Egypt, the indebtedness of the

fellah, the assessment of the land revenue, agricultural taxes, national education, Europeans in the Civil Service, the Bedouins and the Soudan, as to which last his Lordship observed,—

‘Some persons were inclined to advise Egypt to withdraw altogether from the Soudan and her other acquisitions in that region ; but she could hardly be expected to acquiesce in such a policy. Possessing the lower ranges of the Nile, she was naturally inclined to claim dominion along its entire course ; and when it was remembered that the territories in question, if properly developed, were capable of producing inexhaustible supplies of sugar and cotton, we could not be surprised at her unwillingness to abandon them. Unhappily, Egyptian administration in the Soudan had been almost uniformly unfortunate. The success of the present Mahdi in raising the tribes and in extending his influence over great tracts of country, was a sufficient proof of the Government’s inability either to reconcile the inhabitants to its rule, or to maintain order. The consequences had been most disastrous. Within the last year and a half the Egyptians had lost something like 9000 men, while it was estimated that 40,000 of their opponents had perished.

‘In the expectation that the fresh efforts then about to be made would result in the restoration of tranquillity, a plan should be carefully considered for the future administration of the country. Hitherto, it had caused a continual drain on the resources of the Egyptian Exchequer. The first step necessary was the construction of a railway from Souakim to Berber, or what, perhaps, would be still more advisable, to Shendy, on the Nile. The completion of this enterprise would at once change all the elements of the problem. Instead of being a burden on the Egyptian Exchequer, these

equatorial provinces ought to become, with anything like good management, a source of wealth to the Government. What had hitherto prevented their development had been the difficulty of getting machinery into the country, and of conveying its cotton, sugar, and other natural products to the sea. His Lordship apprehended, however, that it would be wise upon the part of Egypt to abandon Darfour, and perhaps part of Kordofan, and to be content with maintaining her jurisdiction in the provinces of Khartoum and Senaar.'

The report continued with observations on the slave-trade, the International Tribunals, the right of Egypt to make commercial conventions, the exemption of Europeans from taxation, the establishment of Egyptian Agencies in Europe. It then gave a retrospect of reforms accomplished, and observations on the Egyptian Budget and the Public Debt.

The report concluded as follows :—

' Having thus given a *resumé* of the steps already taken towards the reorganization of Egypt, and of the further measures in progress or in contemplation, it remains for me to consider how far we can depend upon the continued, steady, and frictionless operation of the machinery we shall have set up. A great part of what we are about to inaugurate will be of necessity tentative and experimental. This is especially true as regards the indigenous Courts of Justice and the new political institutions, both of which will have to be worked by persons, the majority of whom will be without experience or instruction. Had I been commissioned to place affairs in Egypt on the footing of an Indian subject State, the outlook would have been different. The masterful hand of a Resident would have quickly bent everything to his will, and in the space of five years we should have greatly added to the material wealth and well-being of the country by the extension of its cultivated area and the consequent expansion of its revenue ; by the partial, if not the total, abolition of the " *corvée* " and slavery ; the establishment of justice, and other beneficent reforms. But the Egyptians would have justly considered these advantages as dearly purchased at the expense of their domestic independence. Moreover, Her Majesty's Government and the public opinion of England have pronounced against such an alternative. But though it be our fixed determination that the new *régime* shall not sur-

charge us with the responsibility of permanently administering the country, whether directly or indirectly, it is absolutely necessary to prevent the fabric we have raised from tumbling to the ground the moment our sustaining hand is withdrawn. Such a catastrophe would be the signal for the return of confusion to this country and renewed discord in Europe. At the present moment we are labouring in the interests of the world at large. The desideratum of everyone is an Egypt peaceful, prosperous, and contented, able to pay its debts, capable of maintaining order along the Canal, and offering no excuse in the troubled condition of its affairs for interference from outside. France, Turkey, every European Power, must be as anxious as ourselves for the attainment of these results, nor can they be jealous of the means we take to secure them.

‘The very fact of our having endowed the country with representative institutions is a proof of our disinterestedness. It is the last thing we should have done had we desired to retain its Government in leading-strings; for however irresistible may be the control of a protecting Power when brought to bear upon a feeble autocracy, its imperative character disappears in the presence of a popular Assembly. The behests of “the Agent” are at once confronted by the *non possumus* of “the Minister.” But before such a guarantee for Egypt’s independence can be said to exist, the administrative system of which it is the leading characteristic must have time to consolidate, in order to resist disintegrating influences from within and without, and to acquire the use and knowledge of its own capacities. If the multiform and balanced organization we have contrived is to have a chance of success it must be allowed to operate *in vacuo*. Above all, the persons who have staked their future on its existence must have some guarantee that it will endure. How can we expect men born under a ruthless despotism to embark on the duties of an Opposition—which is the vital spark of constitutional government—to criticise, condemn, and countervail the powers that be, if to-morrow the ark of the Constitution to which they trusted is to break into fragments beneath their feet? Amidst the applause of the liberal world a Parliament was called into existence at Constantinople: a few months later it disappeared, and its champion and fugleman is now languishing in the dungeons of Taif. Unless they are convinced that we intend to shield and foster the system we have established it will be in vain to expect the timid politicians of the East to identify themselves with its existence. But even this will not be enough. We must also provide that the tasks entrusted to the new political apparatus do not overtax its untried strength. The situation of the country is too critical, the problems immediately pressing on the attention of its rulers are too vital to be tampered with, even in the interests of political philosophy. Various circumstances have combined to render the actual condition of the Egyptian fellah extremely precarious. His relations with his European creditors are becoming dangerously strained. The

agriculture of the country is rapidly deteriorating, the soil having become exhausted by overcropping and other causes. The labour of the "corvée" is no longer equal to the cleansing of the canals. As a consequence the desert is encroaching on the cultivated land, and, unless some remedy be quickly found, the finances of the country will be compromised.

With such an accumulation of difficulties native statesmanship, even though supplemented by the new-born institutions, will hardly be able to cope unless assisted for a time by our sympathy and guidance. Under these circumstances, I would venture to submit that we can hardly consider the work of reorganization complete, or the responsibilities imposed upon us by circumstances adequately discharged, until we have seen Egypt shake herself free from the initial embarrassments which I have enumerated. This point of departure once attained we can bid her God-speed with a clear conscience, and may fairly claim the approbation of Europe for having completed a labour which everyone desired to see accomplished, though no one was willing to undertake it but ourselves. Even then the stability of our handiwork will not be assured unless it is clearly understood by all concerned that no subversive influence will intervene between England and the Egypt she has recreated.'

These projects were theoretically complete, and taken together, formed a constitution which on paper was nearly perfect. An army duly subordinate to the Executive was to form the ultimate guarantee for order. An efficient police carrying out the decrees of independent and unbribed tribunals was to offer complete security for personal rights and liberty. A Khedive checked by a Council of Ministers, which in turn was to be checked by a legislative Council of twenty-six, while all three were to learn from an assembly of forty-six Notables what were the real wishes of the Egyptian people, was a triumph of constitutional mechanics. A financial Councillor at once the servant and the monitor of the Khedive, and always ready when requested to bring the light of Western science to bear upon the lax ideas of Oriental finance, lent to the whole structure of government a rigidity and stability which could not be too greatly admired. In short, looking at the whole

ingenious apparatus, one cannot but feel that nothing was wanted to make it perfect except an Egyptian Nation. The machine was beautifully constructed and finished, but one looked in vain for the motive power.

The Egypt of Lord Dufferin existed only in imagination. For the most part it was a dream, and far off in the haze of a remote and perhaps impossible future.

The constitution was excellent as a model, but where did the strength reside that alone could make it work? One might search through all its parts, from the Khedive to the policeman, without finding a single trace of the vital force that was to work the whole. It had no organic connexion with the people of Egypt; it had not sprung out of their wants or their aptitudes; it did not express their history or embody their aspirations. The Ministers were responsible to the Khedive, and the army was to obey him. On what was the authority to rest which was to enable him to cope with intrigues in his Cabinet or conspiracy among his troops? There could be only one answer, viz., the presence of the British Army of Occupation, which the project was intended to supersede. It was evident that the whole thing must infallibly fall to pieces in a very short period after the troops were withdrawn.

It is impossible to suppose that a man of Lord Dufferin's ability was under any illusion as to the character of the stuff he had to work with, or the chances of a constitution surviving the withdrawal of the force upon which order reposed. He must have been aware that so long as our power was felt all this constitutional machinery was a mere disguise, and that when that power was removed it would crumble to dust.

In Egypt itself Lord Dufferin's scheme was looked upon as based on an utter misconception of the character

and capacity of the people. A proposal, which after perhaps a century of education and enlightenment, might have had a chance, brought forward under the then existing conditions, was doomed to certain failure.

There were not wanting critics of other than British nationality who argued that this failure was from the first intended, and was to be made use of for strengthening the grasp of England on the land of the Nile. 'Lord Dufferin,' they said, 'was far too clever a man not to know that his paper constitution would fail, and never contemplated anything else.' Reasoning in this way the world gave credit to English statesmen for a degree of astuteness far greater than there is any reason to suppose they ever possessed.

On the 26th January Lord Dufferin succeeded in obtaining an order from the Minister of the Interior forbidding the use of the 'Courbash' by Egyptian officials.

For the reorganization of the native Tribunals a number of Belgian judges were appointed, and with the assistance of Sir Benson Maxwell, late a Colonial Chief Justice, a new Code was drawn up, and preparations made for the commencement of business. The great stumbling-block was found to be the difficulty of procuring competent and impartial native judges. To preside over the new courts, an excellent appointment was made in the nomination of Professor Sheldon Amos, a profound lawyer, a scholar, and an able member of the English Bar.

On the 4th February, 1883, the International Committee appointed to examine into the claims for indemnity for losses sustained during the rebellion was appointed. The amount and nature of these claims have been referred to on pages 186, 187, *ante*.

The British forces in Egypt on the 31st December,

1882, had been reduced to 13,000 men. By successive withdrawals they were brought down to 8376.

At the opening of Parliament on 15th February, Egyptian affairs were referred to in the Queen's speech, in the following terms :—‘ I continue to maintain relations of friendship with all the Powers ; order is now re-established in Egypt, and the British troops will be withdrawn as promptly as may be permitted by a prudent examination of the country.’

The repeated declarations by the British Government of their intention to withdraw the Army of Occupation excited the utmost alarm amongst the European inhabitants of Egypt. These last, driven from their homes by the events brought about by England's intervention in 1882, had now, trusting to the protection of the British force, returned to the country and resumed their former vocations. Upon them the Ministerial utterances produced the worst possible effect.

Owing to the feeling of uncertainty which in consequence prevailed, all large operations were at a standstill. No one was disposed to lay out his money in a country which might at any moment be handed back to the care of a native Administration, and at Alexandria miles of ruins still marked the results of British policy.

Whether the feeling of alarm was justified or not, there is no doubt, that at this time the sentiments of the natives were not friendly towards Europeans. In the provinces Europeans were openly insulted and threatened by the natives, and in many of the villages acts of brigandage were of frequent occurrence.

Not only did the repeated Ministerial declarations of an impending withdrawal from Egypt create anxiety amongst the European population, and to a great extent paralyse commerce, and prevent the inflow of capital, but they exercised a most injurious effect upon the reforms

which the British Government professed such anxiety to push forward.

On every side the same story was told. The natives, daily given to understand that the rule of the English was shortly coming to an end, opposed a passive obstructiveness, in those cases where they did not offer active opposition, to the intended changes. 'What is the use of your making all these alterations,' reasoned the Egyptian official, 'if they are not to last?' That they *could* last after the departure of the English was an idea which never appeared worthy of a moment's consideration by him.

This was the condition of things when, early in the month of March, a Petition in English, French, Italian, and Greek, was drawn up and addressed to Lord Dufferin. The document pointed out that whilst recognising that it was by the British forces that the disturbance of 1882 had been suppressed, the state of affairs in Egypt was such as to show that the permanent retention of a European force was the only means by which order could be maintained, and the security of the European population assured. The petition bore some thousands of influential signatures by persons of all Nationalities. It was presented to Lord Dufferin by a deputation, and by him transmitted to the Foreign Office. From that date nothing more was heard of it, and it was most probably placed in the same pigeon-hole as the memorial for protection sent by the British residents just previous to the Massacre of the 11th June.

On the 29th April, Lieutenant-General F. C. A. Stephenson was appointed to the command of the Army of Occupation, in succession to Sir Archibald Alison.

It would undoubtedly have given Lord Dufferin's projects of reform a better chance of success had that

eminent diplomatist been enabled to remain in Egypt to see them carried into execution. Such, however, was not to be. His Lordship was probably not sorry to leave the difficult task of reforming Egypt to other hands. Though he appears up to the last to have considered his scheme a hopeful one; and in a letter addressed to Cherif Pasha on the eve of the Ambassador's departure on the 3rd May, he expressed the most sanguine views with regard to the regeneration of Egypt.

CHAPTER V.

OPERATIONS UNDER HICKS PASHA.

Colonel Hicks appointed Chief of the Staff—His Officers' Departure for Khartoum—Drilling of the Troops—Expedition to Kawa—Engagement at Marabieh—Engagement at Geb-el-Ain—Return of the Expedition to Khartoum.

It now becomes necessary to go back a little to the period of the appointment of the European officers applied for by Abdel Kader.

In January 1883 Colonel W. Hicks, subsequently known as Hicks Pasha, was appointed by the Khedive Chief of the Staff of the army of the Soudan, with the local rank of Major-General. Though not named Commander-in-Chief till August following, it was intended that he should direct and be responsible for all the operations, whilst nominally holding a subordinate post.

He was a retired officer who had seen much service with the Indian Army, which he entered in 1849. He took part in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1857-9 under Lord Clyde. He subsequently accompanied Lord Napier's expedition to Abyssinia, and was present at the taking of Magdala. In 1882, when holding the retired rank of Colonel, he went to Egypt, and, as above stated, joined the Egyptian service in the following year. Hicks, though a popular and attractive officer, is said to have had little or no experience in handling troops in the field. His appointment was made by the Egyptian Government without reference to the English Government.

As the fate of Hicks's expedition has frequently been spoken of by foreign critics as a British defeat, it is well that the foregoing fact should be borne in mind. With him were associated the following British officers, all nominated in the same manner, viz., Colonels the Hon. J. Colborne and De Cœtlogon, Majors Farquhar and Martin, and Captains Warner, Massey, and Forrestier-Walker.

Hicks and his staff left Cairo on the 7th February, proceeded by train to Suez, and thence by steamer to Souakim. On the 11th they left by the desert route for Berber. The caravan consisted of 145 camels, besides horses. Each officer had a dromedary to ride, and two camels for his luggage. The rest were laden with stores and water. The expedition, which included 350 Bashi-Bazouks, and over 100 Egyptian soldiers, reached Berber on the 1st March, halting on its way at the different wells on the line of route. On the expedition reaching Berber, the Governor, accompanied by an escort mounted on dromedaries, rode out to meet it. At Berber, a town of mud-brick huts, with some 10,000 inhabitants, the force was received with salutes. Here the news of the fall of Bara and Obeid was received.

Arrived at Berber, no time was lost in embarking the force on board the steamers which awaited it, and in proceeding up the Nile to Khartoum, which was reached on the 4th March. Here the troops were assiduously trained in ball-practice, and every effort was made to prepare them for the field. After three weeks the force was joined by Captain Forrestier-Walker, with six Nordenfeldt guns, the first introduced into the Egyptian service. He had been left behind in Cairo to allow the guns' crews to go through a course of training with these weapons. During the first

day's practice at Khartoum it was found that Captain Walker's men had during the journey from Cairo completely forgotten their drill. When an attempt was made to bring the guns into action there was the direst confusion, and no one appeared to have the slightest idea how to load, aim, or discharge the pieces. Hicks had thus an early opportunity afforded him of judging the character of the force placed under his orders.*

Whilst Hicks was thus striving to get his men in order at Khartoum, a number of the Baggaras, estimated at 1800 mounted men, and some 4500 rebels were reported to be assembling about Marabieh and Abu Djumah, to the south of Khartoum. To oppose them a large number of Abdel Kader's troops had been massed at Kawa, on the White Nile, under the command of Hussein Pasha. To reinforce them Hicks proceeded to Kawa; the advanced guard, under Colonel Colborne, leaving on the 31st March. On reaching Kawa, Colonel Colborne found the Egyptian troops, numbering 3000 men, strongly entrenched. On the 6th April they were still further strengthened by the arrival of Hicks with the main body of his expedition.

On the 23rd the Egyptian Army at Kawa, consisting of four and a half battalions of Egyptian infantry (Arabi's old soldiers), the contingent of Bashi-Bazouks, with a few mounted Soudanese, and four Nordenfeldt guns, in all about 5000 strong, set out under the command of Suleiman Pasha. The reason alleged for giving the nominal command of the force to Suleiman Pasha, was that the Mahdi's movement being a religious one it was undesirable to increase the fanaticism of his followers by placing a Christian at the head of the Egyptian troops.

* Captain Forrestier-Walker was shortly after invalided by sunstroke, he perished with Baker Pasha's force at El Teb.

Hicks had two days previously left by steamer, with two Nordenfeldts and a Gatling, and proceeded up the Nile for the purposes of reconnoitring and also to seize the ford of Abou-Zed. The force under Suleiman made two long marches over very rough country and in the hottest weather. Nevertheless the men behaved well. There was no complaining, and at the end of each day's march the men set to work with alacrity making the necessary zeriba or 'abattis.*' The troops marched always in square, Suleiman explaining that if once attacked his men would not have time to adopt that formation.

Hicks joined the camp on the 25th, having ascertained that the rebels had left Geb-el-Ain, and were marching in force to attack the 'Turks,' as the Egyptian force was termed, on their march from Kawa. It was considered as well to wait for the enemy, the army being in a favourable position.

About eleven in the forenoon, on the 26th, the 'assembly' sounded, and a horde of mounted men were seen racing down upon the force out of some brushwood about 2000 yards distant. A square was rapidly completed, the Nordenfeldts and howitzers being placed at the corners. The enemy approached to within 1000 yards, when they were received with rockets and shells. The Egyptian soldiers also threw out 'crows' feet,' or little iron spikes joined four together, a device calculated to make the ground dangerous for unshod men or horses.

* The rebel method of attack is to seize a moment when the troops are occupied and unready, such as drawing water and unloading the camels, and then rush madly on them in a dense mass of men, women, and children. The women and children do not fight, and are only there to encourage the men by their low, continuous, weird cries along with the frantic beating of small drums. To protect the soldiers from these sudden attacks, the first thing is to build a zeriba or thorny hedge round the camping ground. Every one then retires inside the enclosure. Practically the precautions of posting outposts, sentries and vedettes are never taken, so that the troops are always liable to a surprise.

The horsemen, finding the preparations made to receive them, wheeled and galloped away. No losses on either side were reported.

On the 27th tents were struck at dawn, and the force continued its march south, leaving woods and the river on the right. After a twelve hours' march a halt was again called. The afternoon of the 28th brought the force to the river bank, close to the village of Marabieh.

On the following day tents were struck as usual at daybreak, and the march began at seven. The great difficulty of Hicks' movements was the total absence of cavalry. In consequence all reconnoitring had to be done by the officers of the staff. The danger of this insufficient means of scouting was soon shown.

When about an hour from Marabieh, Colonel Farquhar, accompanied by four Bashi-Bazouks, had not gone far, when they raced in to report the enemy's advance. Hicks at once had the square solidly formed, and prepared. As usual, all baggage, camels, and camp-followers, were in the centre. Along each face bristled a thousand rifles, and at each corner at intervals outside the lines were placed the Nordenfeldt guns and rocket-tubes. 'Crows' feet' also were thrown out. About a quarter of an hour after the alarm was given, the enemy, consisting of both cavalry and infantry, appeared in the openings of a wood in considerable numbers, and spread out towards the flanks, with the intention of attacking the angles of the square. They advanced rapidly, led by chiefs on horseback, carrying gaily coloured banners. As they came on, a couple of rockets were fired from the Egyptian square. These burst upon their own men. Owing to obstacles thrown in the way by Suleiman Pasha, there was some difficulty in getting the guns into action, but they did at length open fire. No sooner

had the first few shells fallen amongst the cavalry, then they broke and moved off the field. The infantry still came on boldly, sweeping with an inward curve right and left, the extreme flanks converging towards the opposing angles of the square. File-firing commenced from the front of the Egyptian force which was directly assailed. The men were formed in four ranks, but the front rank not being made to kneel down, and the rear rank men not being able to fire over three men's shoulders, fired their rifles up into the air. Much ammunition was thus thrown away.

Though shot down in numbers, many of the enemy succeeded in getting close enough to the square to throw their spears into it. Nevertheless, encouraged by the presence of their English officers, the Egyptians stood their ground, and poured volley after volley into the attacking force, while the Nordenfeldts, when got to work, did immense execution.

After half-an-hour's fighting, in which Amr-el-Makashef, the rebel commander, and other chiefs, as well as forty Dervishes, were killed, the force was completely broken up and fled in confusion, greeted with howls from the Egyptian troops. A few of the rebels continued to come up singly to within a few yards after the rest had retreated, brandishing their spears in defiance. One after another these poor fanatics were knocked over. When the smoke rolled away it was seen that the ground was strewn with corpses, most of them within 400 yards of the square.

When victory was secured, the joy and enthusiasm of the soldiers was intense. Unaccustomed to find themselves on the winning side they gave way to the wildest demonstrations. The Egyptian officers came up and warmly shook hands with their English comrades.

The forces under Amr-el-Makashef were liberally estimated at from 4000 to 5000, and their losses at about

500. The Egyptian loss, oddly enough, was only two killed and five wounded.

The result of this engagement was to clear the rebels out of Senaar.

After Suleiman's men had rested sufficiently, there being no indications of a renewed attack, the bugles sounded the advance, and the troops were again on the march. Halting every night, the force marched to Geb-el-Ain.

Hicks, anticipating that an attempt would be made by the rebels to cross the river at some point below the ford of Abou-Zed, once more embarked in a steamer, taking with him two Nordenfeldts, a rifled howitzer, and 150 Bashi-Bazouks.

On the 1st May Hicks found the rebels crossing ten miles below Geb-el-Ain, and drove them inland from both banks with considerable loss. Numbers had already crossed over, but a large body, from 2000 to 3000 in number, with camels and baggage, still remained on the eastern bank. In the hope of capturing these Hicks sent to Suleiman Pasha asking him to hurry on as fast as possible. Suleiman, however, had no cavalry, and the infantry marched so slowly that it took them over two days to accomplish the intervening distance. Hicks Pasha then rejoined the main body.

After a short stay at Geb-el-Ain, Hicks and the whole force returned to Khartoum, leaving only garrisons at Kawa and Duem.

The immediate result of Hicks' victory was that the province of Senaar, the capital of which had itself been previously threatened, was entirely pacified, and the population of Khartoum reassured. A great number of chiefs of tribes came in, made submission, were forgiven and returned to peaceful occupations.

CHAPTER VI.

HICKS' MARCH ON OBEID.

Re-conquest of Kordofan—Hicks' Difficulties—Reinforcements from Cairo—The March out from Omdurman—The March to Duem—Hicks' Plans—Difficulties as to Water—Departure from Duem—The Determination to abandon the Communication—Arrival at Sangi-Ham-Ferid.

THE reconquest of Kordofan was now decided on by the Egyptian Government, the annihilation of the Mahdi having become a matter of vital importance from the fact of his emissaries being engaged in fomenting a revolt in Khartoum itself. This was shown by a joint letter from Iskander Bey, who commanded the troops at Obeid, and another Egyptian officer, who, on its surrender, had transferred their allegiance to the Mahdi.

Hicks, on the 13th May, 1883, telegraphed to Cairo requesting that he might be put in undisputed command of the troops, as otherwise he could not be responsible for the Kordofan expedition. This request was not granted until the 22nd of August, at which time Suleiman Pasha was nominated Governor of the Red Sea Provinces. By this change it was hoped that Hicks would acquire complete independence of action, although Al-ed Din Pasha was to accompany him on the Kordofan expedition.

Hicks was fully alive to the difficulties of the task before him. A Council of War was held at Khartoum on the 6th June. The measures to be adopted in the coming Kordofan campaign were discussed, and it was unanimously decided to ask for reinforcements from

Cairo ; the available force at Hicks' disposal being quite inadequate for the undertaking. It was also decided that it would be unadvisable to weaken the garrisons on the Blue Nile, at Messalamieh, Wod Medineh, Senaar, and Karkoj. Hicks' application was for 6000 men, who, he begged, might be sent in time to enable him to commence operations as soon as the rainy season was over. He also asked for 120,000*l.* to defray the expenses of the expedition for six months. The request was forwarded (in Lord Dufferin's absence) through Sir Edward Malet, although as Her Majesty's representative he was careful to inform Hicks that the British Government would in no sense endorse any telegrams he might send. Sir Edward Malet, in sending a copy of the message to Lord Granville, observed that it was already impossible for the Egyptian Government to supply the funds demanded for the Soudan, and that the proposed operations would run a considerable risk of failure unless conducted on a large scale, and unless the army were well supplied in every respect. Under these circumstances the question arose whether Hicks should not be instructed to confine himself to maintaining the supremacy of the Khedive in the regions between the Blue and White Niles.*

On the 8th June, Hicks telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood, as follows :—

' The Government have been asked to send 5000 more troops here. These can only be collected by dragging from their homes and fields unwilling men, and sending them away in chains. These men are to be taken at once before an enemy, having been previously in no way organized. And with what kind of officers ? Of course, I can have no kind of reliance whatever on them. Will you send me instead four battalions of your new army, and I shall be content ? They could return in six months. Fifty-one men of the Krupp battery deserted on the way here, although in chains.'

* This was the course advised by Lord Dufferin, and corresponds with the suggestion of Hicks himself.

The Egyptian Government, on the 11th June, decided to despatch 3000 men as reinforcements. 600 of these were Bashi-Bazouks, and 1800 were old soldiers who had been rejected by General Baker as unfit for the reorganized army, on account of insufficient height or other physical defects. The sum of 40,000*l.* was also to be sent in lieu of the 120,000*l.* asked for.

Hicks was evidently at this time in doubt as to how far he was to exercise real authority over the expedition, and telegraphed, always through the British representative, to ask that distinct orders should be sent that all directions he might give, especially as regarded the organization of the forces, as well as military arrangements during the campaign, should be obeyed. On the 23rd July Hicks telegraphed his resignation in the following terms :—

‘I have to-day sent to the War Office my resignation of my appointment with the Soudan army. I have done so with regret, but I cannot undertake another campaign under the same circumstances as the last. Suleiman Pasha tells me that he does not understand from the telegram of the President of the Council, dated the 14th July, that he is bound to carry out my views with regard to the order or mode of advance or attack of the army now preparing for Kordofan, unless he approves of them. In fact, he says he should be acting contrary to instructions if he carried out my views, and did not agree with them. As my views and his were so opposed in the last campaign, and would be more so in the Kordofan campaign, I can only resign. Within the last few days, on two important occasions my views have been disregarded.’

Hicks, on the 31st July, withdrew his resignation on Suleiman being recalled, and, as already stated, Hicks was appointed Commander-in-Chief.

Sir Edward Malet, on congratulating Hicks on his promotion, said that ‘he had to thank the Egyptian Government alone for it, Her Majesty’s Government interfering as little as possible with affairs in the Soudan.’

On the 5th August Hicks telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood, who had now taken over the new Egyptian

army, begging him to impress on the Ministry of War the necessity for seeing that money was sent for payment of the troops on the Blue Nile.

On August the 7th Hicks telegraphed as to the Mahdi sending several Dervishes to stir up the tribes, and concluded as follows :—

‘ I would now point out the difficulties I am in. There is no money and no transport whatever for the garrison on either side of the White or Blue Nile. I have to use for these columns the transport for the Kordofan column. Transport could be purchased and kept with all the garrisons on both sides the rivers, to enable them to move if necessary.

‘ The men must also be paid. We have no money. A good deal is needed and that immediately. Pray represent this.’

Great efforts had to be made to supply the means of transport for the Kordofan column, and Al-ed Din Pasha himself had to go off to the country east of the Blue Nile for camels, at least 5000 of which were required.

Early in August Al-ed Din returned, having succeeded in getting together some 4000. Amongst them were 800 camels from Berber, and these 800 camels coming by land would easily accomplish the journey in ten days, carrying an enormous quantity of stores. It will hardly be believed that 400 camels were sent off from Berber *without loads*, and that the very camel-saddles had been taken off their backs, and put on board boats to come up by river.

The Mahdi also seems, at this time, to have been giving his attention to the question of transport. According to a report furnished to Al-ed Din Pasha, the Mahdi had sent some Dervishes to the Kabbabish tribes to requisition camels for his journey to Ghebil Gadir. At first the Kabbabishes thought of refusing to obey this order, but on second thoughts they resolved to dissemble. The sheikh accordingly wrote to say, ‘ Send

your men down and we will give you camels.' When, however, the emissaries of the Mahdi came to fetch the camels they were greeted in the following logical manner, 'Your master is a lost man. If he is the Prophet he can have no need of camels. If he is not, we are not bound to give him any.' And in order that there might be no mistake as to their views the Kabbabishes fell upon the Dervishes and killed them.

In the months of July and August, the reinforcements and stores from Cairo, despatched *viâ* Souakim and Berber, began to arrive. The men turned out to be but poor soldiers. The cavalry in particular were defective. The horses were in fair condition, but none of the men had ever been trained to ride. With regard to the infantry there were the same faults which had characterised those previously despatched. The men were inefficient at drill, and had little or no idea of discipline. The officers were apathetic, and had but slight authority over their men.

As the reinforcements came up, they were concentrated with the rest of the force at Omdurman opposite Khartoum, where a regular camp had been formed. Here Hicks, on the 8th September, reviewed his men.

On the 9th September, 1883, Hicks' army marched out from the camp at Omdurman on its way to Duem, 110 miles distant. The force then consisted of 10,000 men. Amongst these were over 7000 regular infantry, 400 mounted Bashi-Bazouks, and 100 Cuirassiers, sheathed in coats of mail resembling those worn in the middle ages. There were four Krupp field guns, ten mountain guns, six Nordenfeldts, 5500 camels, and 500 horses. The 10,000 men included camp-followers, camel-drivers, and others accompanying the expedition, the number of whom was not much short of 2000 men.

The following Europeans accompanied the force, and Hicks subsequently joined it at Duem, viz. :— Colonel Farquhar, Chief of the Staff; Majors Seckendorff, Warner, Massey, and Evans; Captains, Herlth and Matyuga; Lieutenant Morris Brody (late Sergeant-Major Royal Horse Artillery); Surgeon-General Georges Bey, and Surgeon-Major Rosenberg; *Mr. F. Power, correspondent of the *Times*; Mr. O'Donovan, correspondent of the *Daily News*; and Mr. Vizetelly, artist of the *Graphic*. Colonel de Cœtlogon did not accompany, being engaged in patrolling the Nile and hindering the further passage of rebels into Kordofan; and Colonel Colborne, Major Martin, and Captain Forrestier-Walker, were absent on sick leave.

On the march no hostility was encountered. Most of the natives had fled at the approach of the troops. The heat was intense, the thermometer ranging from 105 to 115 degrees of Fahrenheit in the shade. Four men and 200 camels died during the march. Advantage was taken of the opportunity to exercise the troops in forming square and making other preparations to resist attack. By constant practice the force was got to such a state of efficiency that the square was completed and guns and rockets in position in two and a half minutes from the bugle sounding.

The expedition passed Berair, and reached Duem on the 20th, when it was met by Al-ed Din Pasha, who had arrived some days before.

Hicks, on the 6th September, had telegraphed to Cairo that he was starting for Kordofan. He added that he expected to encounter great difficulties in supplying his force with water. Kordofan, it may be observed, is the driest province in the Soudan. The

* Mr. Power, being attacked with dysentery, was subsequently compelled to leave the force at Duem.

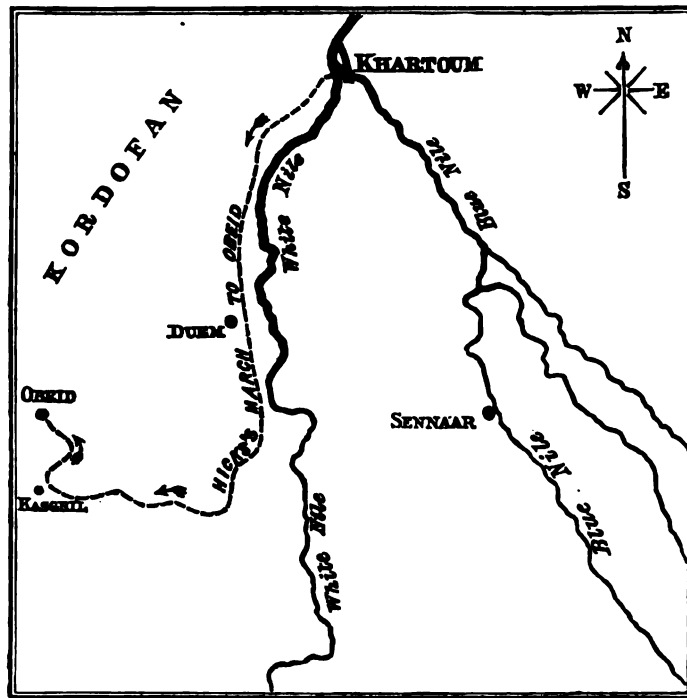
wells contained but little water except immediately after the rains, and even then were insufficient for a large force with camels, horses, &c.

His original plan was to march to Bara and Obeid by the northern and more direct route. By this road the distance would be about 136 miles. Posts were to have been established along the line to keep up communication with the river at Duem, where a *dépôt* was to have been formed. Both Bara and Obeid were to have been retaken and garrisoned. The former, being thirty-five miles to the north of the latter and situated in a fertile country, was to have been first attacked. Here it was proposed the army should remain for a few days to rest and replenish its stores.

On Hicks, who had remained behind at Khartoum, rejoining the army at Duem, these arrangements had to be changed. According to Al-ed Din Pasha, the information he had obtained by means of Arabs sent out on dromedaries, led him to believe that the best supply of water would be found on the southern route by Shatt Norabi and the Khor-Abu-Hable to Rahad, some forty-five miles east of Obeid. The distance by this route, however, was fully 250 miles, being more than 100 miles greater than by the northern road,—a very grave objection. It had been all along known that on striking the Khor-Abu-Hable, which is a torrent taking its rise in Ghebel-Kulfan, a mountain some fifty miles south of Obeid, the army could follow its course for 100 miles, thus making sure of an ample supply of water for that distance. But the difficulty consisted in reaching Norabi, ninety miles distant from Duem, and it was this consideration which had induced Hicks to reject this route. Now Al-ed Din represented that water could be found between the two places, and the question of water supply being paramount, Hicks was induced to change

his decision and proceed by the southern route notwithstanding the increased distance.

On the 24th September, an advance party of 2400 infantry, one squadron of Bashi-Bazouks, two Krupp and four mountain-guns, seized the wells at the village of Shatt, sixteen miles distant. Here the first post was established.



ROUTE OF HICKS' ARMY.

Before quitting Duem, there appear to have been gloomy forebodings amongst the force as to the fate of the expedition.

Major Seckendorff, writing on September 22, said :—

'Pleasant times are certainly not in store for us. The False Prophet will give endless trouble. He musters a great force, and disposes of over 15,000 good breechloaders, and fourteen cannons, besides holding two fortified cities, Bara and El Obeid. The most important thing is that he commands well-mounted cavalry, and fanaticism makes heroes of all his people—a description which certainly does not apply to our troops. I have seen Egyptians in three battles, and should be at a loss to find one hero among them. The lack of water is terrible. All the wells on the road are destroyed. When we march from here we leave the Nile, and other rivers there are none. We cannot carry more water than we need for twenty-four hours, and how much that is, you know when you remember that we are 11,000 men, with 6000 camels, horses, and mules. . . . If our cavalry gives timely notice of attack from the Arabs, then all will go well, but if they succeed in taking us by surprise, then we must be prepared for the worst. If they defeat us once, not one of us will return home, for then the entire Soudan will rise as one man. Khartoum and all will be lost. The people will then place unbounded faith in the False Prophet.'

Mr. O'Donovan wrote as follows :—

'All the expeditions which preceded us during the past two years have been defeated with disaster.* Let us hope ours won't share the same fate.

* * * * *

'You must know that here we are 1500 miles away south of Cairo, in the midst of a wild, almost unexplored country. The Egyptian army, with which I am here encamped on the banks of the Nile, will have but one chance given them, one tremendous pitched battle.

'The enemy we have to meet are as courageous and fierce as the Zulus, and much better armed; and our army is that which ran away before a handful of British troops at Tel-el-Kebir. We are obliged to march in square, with our baggage and water-camels, 5000 in number, in our midst, lest the enemy's cavalry surprise us. In this guise, we can march only ten miles a-day, for after mid-day the heat becomes frightful, as we are not far from the Equator. Thus it takes us four days to get from one set of wells to another. Then, perhaps, when we get to where water ought to be, we find the wells filled up with stones and earth, or, mayhap, rotting bodies of men and camels. Then we have to go right-about-face back again to where we came from, with the enemy's cavalry hanging on our flank all the time, and watching an opportunity to make a dash at us.'

* According to an estimate made by Mr. Power, the Mahdi within 18 months had killed or taken prisoners 16,000 Egyptian soldiers, and captured 7000 Remington rifles, 487,000 packets of cartridges, and 18 guns.

On the 27th September the army marched forth to its doom. Taking a south-westerly direction, on the 30th it encamped at Zeraiga, a village thirty miles south-west of Duem. The heat continued to be overpowering, and the camels were dying in numbers. During the march a difference of opinion arose between Hicks and Al-ed Din, the latter in view of the change of route, wishing to give up the proposed series of posts connecting the army with its base. Hicks, on the other hand, was most unwilling for obvious reasons to take any such step. In a despatch, without date, in the General's writing, purporting to be written from a spot twenty-eight miles from Serakna, and received at Khar-toum on the 17th October, Hicks thus expresses himself:—

‘The army has arrived within twenty-eight miles of Serakna, which place is twenty-two miles from Norabi. We have depended upon pools of rain-water for supply, which we have fortunately found. A reconnaissance made to-day ensures us water as far as Serakna, Guides' information is vague. I regret that I have to abandon my intention of establishing military posts and line of communication with base at Duem. The Governor-General assures me that the Arabs will close in on my route after the army has passed in sufficient force to prevent posts forwarding supplies. Besides, the pools of rain-water, the only supply, will dry up. Water not to be obtained by digging wells. I have no information regarding water between Serakna and Norabi, nor reliable information of the supply there. This causes me great anxiety. I quite expected Serakna to be occupied by the enemy, but the reconnaissance to-day found the place evacuated. The Arabs had left this morning. The health of the troops is on the whole good, which is fortunate, as we have no sick carriage. The heat is intense.’*

The determination to abandon the posts was not come to without a Council of war being summoned; and Hicks, on the 3rd October, on the army reaching a place near Serakna, wrote the following report, the last communication ever received from him :

* This and the following communication from Hicks were first made known by the *Egyptian Gazette*, on the 27th November.

'Camp near Serakna, October 3, 1883.

'On leaving Duem on the White Nile to march by the Khor-el-Nil to Melbeis and Obeid I decided that my line of communications should be secured by posts of 200 men each, left in strongly fortified positions at the following places :—

	miles distant		miles distant
Shatt	16	Abli	28
Zeraiga	16	Beliab	22
Serakna	32	Um Sheikh	12
Norabi	16	Rahad	14
Agaila	24	Khaashil (Kasghil?)	14
Johan	32	Melbeis	25

'At all these places I was informed water would be found.

'Large quantities of biscuits were to arrive at Duem, and as we were unable to leave a single camel at the base 1000 were ordered to be purchased and forwarded to Duem. H. E. Al-ed Din Pasha had already at Khartoum 300, and gave orders for the remaining 700 to be purchased and forwarded to Duem without delay.

'The biscuits would then with ammunition and other stores be pushed on to the front from post to post. Depôts would be formed at each post, and in case of a reverse a line of retreat secured, the troops falling back upon these depôts where we should be certain of finding supplies of food, ammunition, and water.

'We marched to Shatt and formed the first post and depôt there; but before reaching Zeraiga I was informed by the Governor-General of the Soudan that it was useless for me to expect any supplies to be pushed up from Duem, that the soldiers left at the posts would not guard the convoys; in fact, that they would be afraid to do so; that to ensure supplies being forwarded *an army* would be required with each convoy. The Arabs, although now absent from our line of route, would return after we had passed, and that they would be numerous, and the garrisons of the posts would not consider themselves strong enough to forward the supplies; that it would be dangerous; and I would find that they would not run the risk.

'The Governor-General requested me to abandon the idea of having this line of posts; to give up my line of communications and line of retreat, and to advance with the army *en l'air* with fifty days' supply of food only, the Arabs closing in on our rear.

'I am naturally very averse to this, but if, as his Excellency assures me, it is a fact that the posts will not be supplied from the base of Duem, and supplies will not be forwarded through them, I should, in garrisoning these posts, be only weakening my fighting force without gaining any advantage. I have therefore called a Council, have had

the matter explained and requested the members to record their opinion.

‘W. HICKS, Lieut.-General.’

The following were the opinions of the officers of the Council :—

‘H. E. Al-el Din Pasha states that he feels convinced that the Arabs will collect in such numbers on the route after the army has passed that the garrisons of the posts would not pass on provisions or stores, and that we cannot count in the least on obtaining supplies from Duem; that the posts would only be a source of weakness, as we should leave in them 2500 men we require; also that some of the posts would be attacked and taken; that the garrisons could not be depended upon to hold them, and that no soldiers would be induced to leave with a convoy.

‘H. E. Hussein Pasha Muzar wishes to retain the posts as far as Norabi (or half way to Obeid), but the Government must send troops from Cairo, and meanwhile Khartoum must send a battalion to escort provisions and stores.

(*In the margin.*—N.B.—‘Time does not admit of the arrival of troops from Cairo, and Khartoum has a too weak garrison, as it is.’)

‘Rajjeb Bey is of opinion that, desirable as it is, according to military rules to retain the lines of communication, under the circumstances the intention of establishing the posts must be abandoned.

‘Abbas Bey is of the same opinion as Rajjeb Bey.

‘Colonel Farquhar, Chief of Staff, considers that, under the peculiar circumstances, the retention of the posts and line of communication must be abandoned.

Note.—‘After Obeid has fallen, and the country is in consequence more settled, it is expected that a small force can be sent from Obeid by the shorter route towards Shatt, to meet an escort coming from Duem with provisions, &c. Water for a small force will probably be obtainable on opening the wells.

‘W. HICKS, Lieut.-General.’

After this, the army appears to have arrived on the 7th October at Sange Hamferid, forty-five miles south-west of Duem. A letter from Mr. O’Donovan from that position, and dated the 10th October, says :—

‘We have halted for the past three days, owing to the uncertainty of the water supply in front. Here we are entirely dependent on surface pools. A reconnaissance of thirty miles forward yesterday by Colonel

Farquhar ascertained that the pools were barely sufficient for a rapid march to the village of Serakna, now deserted, where there are a few wells. The enemy is still retiring, and sweeping the country bare of cattle.'

At this point, it is necessary to leave Hicks' force, and consider what had, in the meanwhile, been taking place in Lower Egypt.

CHAPTER VII.

EVENTS IN LOWER EGYPT.

Sir E. Baring's Appointment—The Cholera Outbreak—The Retirement of Sir E. Malet—Mr. Clifford Lloyd's Appointment—Irrigation Improvements—Appointment of Mr. Edgar Vincent.

IN May 1883, Sir Evelyn Baring was appointed British Minister and Plenipotentiary in Egypt. His nomination was generally popular in the country.

As Commissioner of the 'Caisse' of the Public Debt he had shown an amount of administrative ability and firmness which had raised him at least a head and shoulders above his colleagues. The reputation gained by Sir Evelyn in this capacity he had fully maintained as English Controller-General, and the best hopes were raised by his appointment as Lord Dufferin's successor.

All attempts to proceed with Lord Dufferin's schemes of reform were now checked by the outbreak of the cholera epidemic. It originated at Damietta early in June, and rapidly spread through the different towns and villages in the Delta. It even reached some portion of Upper Egypt.

The naturally unclean and unsanitary habits of the people, aided by poor living and other privations, led to the rapid spread of the epidemic. Its progress was still further facilitated by the prevailing custom of throwing dead bodies of cattle, and at times, of human beings, into the canals which formed the source of water supply to the people.

The cholera raged with more or less intensity from

June till November, and during this time carried off several thousands of human beings. Taking one return, that for the 2nd August, 1072 deaths are given as the mortality in twenty-four hours. This rate soon vastly increased, and at one period it is said that as many as 1000 died in Cairo alone on a single day.

A panic, resembling in some respect that of 1882, seized the European population, and a great number for a second time fled the country.

To check the spread of the disease the most stringent regulations were issued. A series of 'cordons,' formed of gendarmerie and police, was drawn around the infected districts, and various other precautions were taken. These arrangements, however, were enforced in so ineffective a manner that under other circumstances the blunders committed would have been ludicrous. The gendarmerie and police stationed to prevent individuals leaving the 'cordoned' spots carried out their instructions in such a way as to prevent medical assistance, medicines, and provisions passing in. At one time whole convoys were thus arrested. In consequence of these and other senseless obstructions the sufferings of the people in many parts were intensely aggravated.

So great was the sympathy felt in England for the sufferings of the Egyptian people during the cholera epidemic that a Relief Fund was formed by public subscription, and nurses and medical comforts were despatched to Egypt. It will, perhaps, scarcely be believed that the Egyptian Custom House officials claimed the right to levy customs dues on the articles thus sent, and one consignment at least was, in consequence, sent back to England.

During all this period the conduct of the Khedive was most courageous, and entirely refutes the imputation of timidity which has been so often made against him.

When the epidemic was at its height, disregarding all advice to the contrary, Tewfik left Alexandria for Cairo, where he personally visited the cholera hospitals, conversed with the patients, and ascertained their wants and requirements. He remained in Cairo several days and gave the most minute instructions as to the sufferers, and besides subscribing liberally to the Cholera Relief Fund, set a bright example of devotion to those around him.

To check the epidemic, and also to study the subject of cholera generally, a number of doctors arrived from India and other places.

The ravages of the disease were mainly confined to the native population, which, in the large towns and notably in Cairo, suffered severely.

In Boulak, one of the worst quarters of Cairo, the disease made such ravages that the whole district had to be evacuated. This measure was carried out with so little intelligence on the part of the Egyptian authorities that the houseless people proceeded to spread themselves throughout the non-infected quarters of the city. Thanks to the vigorous intervention of General Stephenson this was stopped. The infected quarter was destroyed by fire, and the occupants isolated in camps in the desert; but for this, the consequences might have been most disastrous.

The relative positions of the Egyptian and English authorities at this period cannot be better illustrated than by reproducing a humorous sketch which appeared in the *Egyptian Gazette* of the 14th August, and which is as follows :—

‘ We have received from an anonymous contributor a document professing to be the Minutes of a meeting of an Extraordinary Council held recently at the Ministry of the Interior. As a rule we refuse to publish anonymous communications without a guarantee as to their

authenticity; but the present one, though we think it cannot be strictly accurate, seems so generally in accordance with probabilities, that we cannot refuse to publish it, without, however, in any way guaranteeing its authenticity.

‘*H. E. Cherif Pasha.*—Gentlemen, in view of the very exceptional state of the country, which has recently, by the dispensation of Providence, been endowed with a theoretical constitution and visited by an epidemic, the one a blessing and the other a calamity, both of which the Ministers of His Highness are equally unable to understand, we have deemed it advisable to summon to our Council their Excellencies Generals Stephenson, Wood, and Baker. We are aware, Generals, that a large portion of Her Majesty’s dominions are endowed with a constitution, though happily free from Asiatic cholera; that another portion of those dominions is frequently visited by the epidemic, though unendowed with a constitution. It is only in Egypt, gentlemen, that those two evils,—I mean that blessing and that evil, have simultaneously occurred in one country, and we therefore look with confidence to your greater experience to assist us. Any orders which you may give, Generals, shall be—well, published in the *Moniteur Egyptien*, and any act of the Government or its officials to which you object shall be authoritatively denied to have taken place in the same journal. As to—

‘*General Wood.*—May we understand, Excellency, that the orders given will be executed?

‘*General Stephenson.*—Without entering into details, I desire your Excellency to understand that it is absolutely necessary that order should be preserved in the capital; that order has not been preserved up to the present, and unless the Government can guarantee that it will be preserved for the future, I shall myself take measures to preserve it.

‘*General Baker.*—May I be permitted to assure General Stephenson that the deplorable events which have occurred (I desire to be understood as speaking privately and confidentially) will not occur again. Some slight misunderstandings arose, owing to an impression on the part of some English police-officers that they had other duties to perform beyond drawing their pay, and one of them, owing to his ignorance of the language, imagined himself insulted by the Prefect of Police. It is, however, now generally understood among my officers that, as Christians in a Mussulman country, it is peculiarly necessary that they should adopt the Christian principle of turning the other cheek to the smiter, and the Mussulman practice of leaving the execution of necessary measures to a Divine Providence and a native policeman. All these unfortunate occurrences have been, with our full consent, officially denied in the *Moniteur Egyptien*; and, if the Council will only suppress the indecent comments of the public press, I have no doubt that the efficient force which I command will be able to maintain order as efficiently in Cairo as at Mansoorah.

‘*Borelli Bey* desired to make a slight correction to the remarks of

Baker Pasha. He considered that the press, properly conducted, might be made a very valuable ally of the Government. He read extracts from the *Bosphore Egyptien* of the following day, proving that that paper warmly supported any decision at which the Government might be going to arrive; he had also already indited a notice for the *Moniteur Egyptien* of to-morrow denying that the present Council had ever taken place. He had had a long experience in France and elsewhere, and could assure Ministers that money properly applied was a powerful assistance in obtaining converts, in the press and elsewhere. In Europe this was sometimes called a misappropriation of funds, but he had certificates to show that in Egypt it was not so misunderstood. He had excellent allies in Messrs. X. and Z., experienced journalists and officials, fellow-countrymen of his own, who would be delighted to assist him in starting, with a small subsidy from Government, a perfectly independent paper—he meant, independent of facts.

'*Salem Pasha* did not see the necessity of any other paper than the *Moniteur Egyptien*, which was useful for officially registering the excellent measures taken by the Board of Health. If there were other papers these notices got copied into them, and then they got read, which gave them a dangerous publicity, because people then made disagreeable inquiries.

'*General Wood* here remarked that they had hardly met to discuss the merits of the Egyptian Press, and again requested H. E. Cherif Pasha to state whether there was any guarantee that orders given would be executed.

'*Khairi Pasha* interposed and begged the Council to remember that they were in Egypt, and that they should consider the national customs and prejudices of a free people. It was contrary to all the traditions of the country to adopt sanitary measures, or to expect the execution of orders; he implored the Council to respect the customs of private and public life. As Minister of the Interior, he must decline all responsibility for the consequences, if any attempt were made either to improve the health of the population, or to insist upon the execution of any order whatever.

'*General Stephenson* again asked for a distinct statement from H. E. Cherif Pasha as to whether he was prepared to govern the country, or to admit his inability to do so.

'*General Baker* here suggested a compromise, which he thought might meet the difficulties of the situation. He proposed that he himself should be temporarily invested with the powers of President of the Council, Minister of the Interior, Governor of Cairo, Commander-in-Chief of the English and Egyptian forces, Governor of the Soudan, President of the Board of Health, Minister of Education, Sheikh-el-Azhar, Minister of Public Works, and Minister of Justice, while his Military Secretary might take charge of the Bureau de la Presse. He hinted that if Sir Edward Malet was desirous of proceeding to England

he would further be willing to take charge of the Agency until the arrival of Sir Evelyn Baring.

'This suggestion, not meeting with unanimous approval, it was found necessary to wake H. E. Cherif Pasha and explain to him the nature of the general observations which had been made during the last forty minutes and to call upon him for a reply.

'*H. E. Cherif Pasha* commenced by saying that he hoped nobody thought that he was not fully alive to the gravity of the situation. The sleepless nights which it had caused him were testified to by the fact that he had then been unable to avoid closing his eyes for a few moments without, however, for a moment taking his mind off the important subject under consideration. Indeed he might say that he had barely two hours a-day of daylight left for playing billiards,* and the necessity of taking this exercise had frequently kept him up when he ought to have been in bed. Last night Mourad Pasha had actually given him ten points in a hundred and beaten him; however, he only mentioned that to explain the state of nervous exhaustion into which he had fallen, and he begged General Stephenson not to look so impatient. It appeared to him that the authorities had rather cannoned against each; he begged pardon, he meant there seemed to have been some sort of a collision. For his part, if he couldn't score off the white he was quite willing to do so off the red. He meant that if the Egyptian soldiers couldn't keep order the English would have to do it. He quite saw that, and that pocketing the red was quite out of question. He didn't want to be pocketed himself, for he couldn't bear playing from balk. His Excellency was beginning to say that his cue was an English one and rather heavy, when the secretary woke him up with a cup of coffee, and after apologies he continued:—

'General Stephenson asks me for a guarantee that orders given shall be executed; really, gentlemen, I cannot see how such a guarantee can be expected from a Minister. Is it even to be desired? Why, gentlemen, I have been twenty years a Minister in Egypt, and in those twenty years have given an average of ten contradictory orders a week. I ask you to imagine the confusion that would have resulted if all those orders had been obeyed. No, gentlemen, we issued orders in old times in accordance with what seemed to be best for *our* own convenience, and we expected that our sub-officials would treat those orders with as much consideration as was not incompatible with *their* own convenience. We deny with indignation that we were ever so arbitrary as to insist on their absolute execution ourselves. Let me give an instance. A few eminent servants of H. H. possessed lands on either side of a canal, and orders were accordingly issued that water was to be given to those lands and not wasted upon less important proprietors. At the same

* Cherif Pasha's predilection for billiards has been already referred to in these pages.

time, in giving such orders, we allowed our sub-officials to so far profit by them that others were able to get water in consideration of a trifling gratification to them. This, gentlemen, is an example of the old system ; it gave us considerable advantages and little trouble ; it gave our sub-officials a means of supplementing their nominal income, which we never paid.

‘ But things have now changed, and we are obliged to issue our orders in accordance with what public opinion in Europe thinks *ought* to be done ; we therefore draw up decrees and regulations with great care, we give them the widest possible publicity, and what more can you require ? Europe does not care whether they are executed, neither do we. In this way we have abolished forced labour, the slave-trade, the courbash, backsheesh, and fifty other abuses, and Europe has praised us : why should we do more ? Now, because your own individual interests are concerned you suddenly ask us to see that they are executed. Gentlemen, *you never asked us to do this before* ; you were content with decrees before, and we, frankly, have neither means nor experience as to how to enforce them at a moment’s notice. If, making a new departure from your previous policy, you wish now actually to have orders obeyed as well as published, well, gentlemen, let me beg you do it yourselves ; for us, they are contrary to our habits, contrary to our wishes, contrary to our power.

“ It is excessively hot weather,” said Cherif Pasha as the Council broke up, “ we have time for two hours’ nap and then a game of billiards.”

“ There’s some truth in what he has said,” said General Wood to General Stephenson ; “ perhaps until further orders we had better govern the country ourselves.”

“ Sartorius,” called General Baker, “ write a line for me to the *Moniteur* and deny everything.”

The elections for the Chamber of Notables under Lord Dufferin’s scheme now began to take place. In general the greatest apathy appeared to prevail on the subject, both on the part of electors and elected. As a rule the large landowners and the wealthiest class of natives were among the elect. Of their duties many of them showed such an amount of ignorance as would have caused a profound shock to Lord Dufferin had he been present.

On the 11th September Sir Evelyn Baring arrived in Cairo, and on the 18th Sir Edward Malet, who had been appointed Minister at Brussels, quitted Egypt.

Of the important part played by Sir Edward during the Arabi revolt, and the eminent services rendered by him to England and Egypt, a sufficient record has already appeared in these pages: It only remains to add that on giving up his post Sir Edward took with him the esteem and good wishes not only of the whole of the British colony in Egypt, but also of the most intelligent members of the foreign and native population.

On the day of Sir E. Malet's departure Mr. Clifford Lloyd, who had been appointed 'Inspector of Reforms,' took up his appointment in Cairo, and looked anxiously about him to discover the reforms he had come to inspect.

Amongst the reforms really in progress at this period, none was of greater practical importance than that of improving the existing system of irrigation. This had been confided to Colonel Scott Moncrieff, who has done more good to Egypt than all the reformers with which Lord Dufferin's scheme has deluged the country.

On the 4th of November a decree was issued, by which Mr. Edgar Vincent was appointed Financial Adviser to the Government in the place of Sir Auckland Colvin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF HICKS' ARMY.

Anxiety as to Hicks' Fate—News of his Defeat—The Prisoners at El Obeid—The Numbers of the Mahdi's Forces, their Losses—The Mahdi at El Obeid—Results of the Defeat—Reinforcements demanded—Two thousand Soldiers arrive from Fashoda—Neglect of the Mahdi to follow up his Victory.

THE expedition of Hicks Pasha, when last mentioned, was at Sange Hamferid, and already in difficulties as to the water supply.

Then came a long period of silence, and great anxiety began to be felt. It was known that at Khartoum there were numerous partisans of the Mahdi who would not fail to inform him of the strength and composition of Hicks' army. From its outset it had been beset by the Mahdi's spies, who informed him of every movement. Hicks, on the other hand, had to trust to treacherous guides, and possibly false reports. It was, moreover, no secret that there was dissension in the Egyptian force, for Al-ed Din Pasha was jealous at not having been entrusted with the chief command, and it was not certain how many of the Egyptian officers were not more or less 'Mahdists.'* Here then were all the elements of failure.

Military critics had, from the first, condemned the decision forced upon Hicks to give up the proposed series of posts connecting the army with its base.

* A German servant named Klein attached to the expedition, subsequently related that he remembered Colonel Farquhar coming into the tent of his (Klein's) master, who was with the advanced guard, and saying, 'We find the Mahdi has many friends among the Egyptian officers.'

Further, Stone Pasha, an American officer of experience, formerly Chief of the Staff, stated that the force despatched was wholly inadequate, and he anticipated nothing but disaster.

Sir Samuel Baker, a high authority on the Soudan, adopted the same view. As week after week passed on without intelligence, the public anxiety increased. Telegrams were sent by the Government to Khartoum twice a-day demanding news. Colonel de Cœtlogon patrolled the White Nile in a fast steamer, but in vain. Attempts to send messengers to communicate with the army were made, but they failed. One messenger who had been captured by the rebels was put alive into an ant-hill, and this tended to discourage others who might have been induced to make the attempt.

At last, on the 30th October, 1883, three soldiers entered Khartoum from Duem, and reported that Hicks had been attacked by from 25,000 to 30,000 rebels, at a place three leagues from Obeid, and that he had formed square and repulsed the attack, inflicting a loss of 8000 men on the enemy. After this, according to their account, he besieged Obeid of which on the 4th November he was in full possession, the Egyptian losses being *nil*.

Doubts were entertained as to the accuracy of this information. The absence of any loss on the Egyptian side in operations of such magnitude was felt to be improbable. Further it was pointed out that on the date at which Hicks was stated to have entered Obeid, he must, according to his calculated rate of progress, have been at least a week's march from that town. The report received no sort of confirmation, official or otherwise, and was soon generally disbelieved.

On the 18th November the French Consul-General received a short telegram from his agent at Khartoum,

stating that, according to information from a private source, Hicks' army was surrounded and in want of provisions.

On the 19th November two messengers arrived at Duem with letters. According to their statements a fight had taken place between Egyptian troops and a great number of rebels at a place called Kaz. During the first two days' fighting the rebels suffered great loss. The Mahdi, seeing this, advanced with his regular troops from Obeid, all well armed. The fighting continued from the 2nd to 5th November, when Hicks' whole army was destroyed, all being killed but about fifty men, one of whom was a European. The cause of the defeat was that when Hicks heard of the Mahdi's advance he divided his forces into two parts, one to attack and occupy Obeid, the other to fight the Mahdi at Kaz. The Mahdi met the troops proceeding to Obeid, and fighting commenced. The other division, hearing the firing, advanced to assist, and on joining the rest formed square.

This news was confirmed by other persons, including a Copt, who, disguised as a Dervish, arrived at Khar-toum from Kordofan on the 21st November. He asserted that he was an eye-witness of the fight, in which, according to him, the Egyptian troops, with the exception of 200 wounded, were totally destroyed. The later accounts received, contained more details ; but as these are in many respects conflicting, it is proposed to give a short summary of one or two of the different narratives, omitting only such portions as would be mere repetition.

According to a camel-driver, who followed in the service of Kenaui Bey, the army, after leaving Duem, met the rebels, with whom skirmishes took place, in which some Bashi-Bazouks and 'Chargiehs' (pioneers)

were lost. Then the army arrived at Rahad, where there was a lake ; from this the army took the necessary water supply, and set out for Alouba. On the way the rebels attacked in great numbers, but they were defeated. The army passed the night at Alouba.

The next day (2nd November), the force started with a supply of water, and marched for three hours through a forest. There a large force of rebels suddenly appeared, and the army halted and formed square. Fighting went on all that day, but after an engagement, in which there were losses on both sides, the rebels were again defeated. Entrenchments were thrown up, and the night was passed on the field of battle.

On the 3rd the march was resumed. After an hour the supply of water was exhausted. Again the rebels attacked in considerable numbers, endeavouring to surround the army, but after a serious engagement, in which both sides lost severely, they were once more defeated. The night was passed on this new field of battle.

On the 4th, the army directed its course towards Kashgil. After four hours' marching the force was surprised by the rebels, who directed against it a well-sustained fire. The soldiers were halted in square, and returned the fire. They suffered terribly from thirst. Nevertheless they continued to fight all that day and during the night.

On the morning of the 5th, the firing having ceased, the army advanced towards the wells. After a half-an-hour's march, the rebels, who were hidden in the woods, surrounded the troops on all sides, and opened fire. The force replied with a strong fusillade, which was well kept up till towards mid-day, when the rebels made a general charge with guns, spears, and lances, and destroyed the whole army with the exception of 200 Egyptian soldiers

and some Negro servants, some of whom were wounded.

On the 1st December a telegram from Khartoum stated that for the last week there had been an Arab rumour that there were dissensions between Hicks and Al-ed Din Pasha prior to the battle, and that these dissensions were known to all. Hicks, according to the rumour, was weary of waiting near the water at Melbeis. Al-ed Din Pasha refused to move further, because there was no water, and half the army went over to him, and refused to obey Hicks. Hicks therefore pushed ahead with all his European staff, artillery, and seven or eight thousand men, was entrapped into an ambush, and fought for three days, not having a drop of water or a reserve cartridge: all were destroyed. The rumour added that Al-ed Din and his party who stood by the water and stores were afterwards attacked, and that they were at the far side of Obeid fighting every day, with large losses; and that there was with them a white officer, English or German, who escaped badly wounded from the massacre of Hicks and his army. There was also Mr. Vizetelly, an artist, a prisoner in El-Obeid.

The story of a Greek merchant who escaped from Obeid was, that when Hicks started from Duem, large bodies of Arabs encamped each night on the place occupied by the army the night before. Hicks frequently wished to turn back and disperse these men, but Al-ed Din Pasha assured him that they were friendly natives following in support of the army.

On the sixth or seventh day Hicks sent back a small body of his men. These were fired upon by the Arabs, and Hicks then insisted that these should be dispersed. Al-ed Din refused, and Hicks then drew his sword, and threw it on the ground saying that he resigned, and would no longer be responsible if the Governor-General did not permit his orders to be obeyed. Hicks declared that

from the time he left Duem Al-ed Din caused his orders to be disobeyed. After some time Hicks was persuaded to resume the command, but things went on as before, the body of Arabs in the rear always growing larger.

After some slight engagements Kashgil was reached. Here an ambushade had been formed some days before, the guide employed having been told to lead the army thither. When the Arabs opened fire, it was from behind rocks and trees, where they were wholly covered and could fire with impunity. The shells and bullets of the Egyptian force were harmless, so thick was the cover. Hicks wheeled his army to gain the open, but found the defile blocked by Al-ed Din's so-called friends, the Arabs, who had so long been following him. These also had got under shelter, and opened fire on the army. The Arabs from behind their protection kept up the fire for three days, and in the whole affair lost only from 270 to 300 men. The Egyptian soldiers were then lying on the ground dying or in convulsions from thirst, and the Arabs found them in groups of twenty or more unable to rise. They were all speared where they lay. Hicks' staff and escort had water, and were in a group on horseback. When the Arabs came out of cover, Hicks charged, leading his staff and shooting down all the rebels in his way. They galloped past towards a Sheikh, supposed by the Egyptians to be the Mahdi. Hicks rushed on him with his sword, and cut his face and arm. The man had on a Darfur steel mail shirt. Just then a thrown club struck Hicks on the head and unhorsed him, the horses of the staff were speared, but the officers fought on foot till all were killed. Hicks was the last to die.* The Mahdi was not in the battle, but

* The account here given of Hicks' death is borne out to some extent by another version, according to which the cartridges being all spent Hicks put himself at the head of the army and ordered bayonets to be fixed. When last seen he was with his staff. Sword in one hand and revolver in the other, he charged in the midst of the enemy and was in a few moments

came to see Hicks' body. As each Sheikh passed, he pierced it with his lance, an Arab custom, that he might say he assisted at his death.

Later still, a boy who had been with Hicks' army, and afterwards entered the service of Sir Redvers Buller, made a statement to the following effect:—At Lake Rahad Hicks made a fort and mounted four Krupp guns, and nineteen smaller ones. The troops rested there for three days. The enemy was hemming them in, and Hicks determined to push on to Obeid. The army advanced at daybreak. It had not marched an hour when the enemy for the first time opened fire, at long range. Some camels only were wounded. The army halted for the night, entrenched itself, making a zeriba. For two days the army remained in camp. It then marched to Shekan, where it again halted for two days in consequence of its being surrounded by the enemy, whose fire began to kill both men and camels. Leaving Shekan, the force marched till noon. It then halted, as the enemy were firing from the bushes on all sides.

On the third day the cavalry made a sortie, and encountering the enemy's horsemen, put them to flight, capturing several horses. This was early in the day. The square then resumed its march. Shortly after, the galloping of horses was heard, and countless Arabs appeared on all sides, waving their banners and brandishing their spears above the bushes. The square was halted, and, opening fire, killed a great many, whilst

overpowered. Another report contains the following:—'Surrounded by his staff who dropped around him one by one, Hicks fought like a lion, emptying his revolver thrice and then hacking with his sword till a lance-thrust stretched him beside his slaughtered companions.' So impressed, according to one narrative, were the Arabs by Hicks' gallantry that they resolved to build a tomb over his body in recognition of his bravery. Klein, the German servant to one of Hicks' officers (already referred to) and who managed to escape, reported that Hicks was taken prisoner in the second day's fighting and afterwards killed at a place three days distant from Obeid. He adds that the Pasha's hands were cut off and he was cut to pieces afterwards.

the Egyptians at the same time lost heavily. The bushes were too thick for the Krupp guns to do much execution, but the machine-guns were at work day and night. Next morning Arabs were seen lying six deep killed by these guns. There were nine Englishmen with the force besides Hicks. The Egyptians lay down to hide, but Hicks ordered his English officers to go round and make them stand up. Some of the English officers were killed in so doing. At noon he sounded the assembly, to ascertain who was left alive. The force was shortly after joined by Al-ed Din Pasha.

The next morning the entire force marched together through a forest. Through field-glasses an immense number of the enemy could be seen. The men insisted on continuing their march to the water instead of halting to fight. Hicks, yielding to their remonstrance, continued to march in square. Before noon, Melbeis, where there was abundance of water, was in sight. About noon the Arabs in overwhelming numbers burst upon the front face of the square. It was swept away like chaff before the wind. Seeing this, the other sides of the square faced inward, and commenced a deadly fusillade, both on the enemy and crossways on each other. Terrible slaughter ensued. Seeing that all hope of restoring order was gone, Hicks and the few English officers who remained then spurred their horses and sprang out of the confused mass of dead and dying. The officers fired their revolvers killing many and clearing a space around them till all their ammunition was expended. They had then got clear outside the square, and took to their swords fighting till they fell. Hicks alone remained. He was a terror to the Arabs. They said his sword never struck a man without killing him. They named him 'the heavy-armed.' He kept them

all at bay, until a cut on the wrist compelled him to drop his sword. He then fell. The struggling and slaughtering went on for three hours. The black troops forming the rear of the square remained in good order when all else was confusion. They marched some distance and formed a square of their own. They were pursued, and the Dervishes shouted to them to surrender. They replied, 'We will not surrender. We will not eat the Effendinias (Khedive's) bread for nothing. We will fight till we die, but many of you will die too!' Whilst the parleying was going on, an unexpected rush was made which broke the square, and the blacks were all killed.

This last account, which is the most circumstantial that has come to light, bears, it will be observed, a certain resemblance to the narrative of the camel-driver already quoted. In both, the serious fighting is made to begin at Lake Rahad. The advance, accompanied by frequent halts, was made through trees and bushes. The attacks made under cover were received in square formation, the men were suffering from want of water, and the final onslaught was made about mid-day. The final scene in which Hicks and his staff charged their foes also agrees with the previous accounts.

The undermentioned European officers are believed to have perished at the battle of Kashgil :—Lieutenant-General Hicks Pasha, Colonel Farquhar, Majors Warner, Massey (Interpreter), Evans, Von Seckendorff, Captains Herlth and Matyuga, Lieutenant Brody, Surgeon-General Georges Bey, and Surgeon-Major Rosenberg, besides Mr. O'Donovan and Mr. Vizetelly, newspaper correspondents.

Of the number of Hicks' force which perished, it is impossible to give a correct estimate. According to Gordon they were so numerous that the Mahdi made a pyramid with their skulls.

The men from Obeid, already referred to, stated the total number of prisoners there to be 100. These included three priests, one clerk, one lay-brother, and six nuns, all Italian subjects. There were also some Greek priests.

Of the number of the Mahdi's forces engaged no very accurate accounts exist. The Copt whose narrative has already been referred to, put it at the preposterous figure of 300,000. The soldiers who brought the news of Hicks' pretended victory, put the Mahdi's forces at from 25,000 to 30,000, but Orientals, in the matter of numbers, are notoriously inexact. The Greek merchant whose account has been quoted, mentioned the Mahdi's whole standing army as 35,000 men. Gordon Pasha, on the other hand, expressed the opinion that the enemy did not exceed 4000 in number.

It is certain that a considerable portion of the Mahdi's forces consisted of the trained soldiers, formerly belonging to Arabi's army, and who had surrendered at Bara and Obeid. These alone amounted to 5500, and were well provided with Remington rifles, and an ample supply of ammunition. It is said that these soldiers were placed in the front rank, with the Soudanese behind to prevent their running away.

There is reason to believe that Adolf Klootz,* a late Sergeant of the Pomeranian army, who was servant to Major Seckendorff, and deserted some days before the battle of Kashgil, took part in the action, and commanded the Mahdi's artillery. A Christian lay-sister of of the Austrian Convent at Obeid, who succeeded in escaping a month later, reported that this man was then with the Mahdi, and was the only European saved from Hicks' army.

Of the Mahdi's losses in the battle with Hicks no

* Klootz is the person referred to in many of the reports as Vizetelly.

record exists. Mr. Power mentions that the Arabs said that in the three days' fight the loss was 50,000, and at another time that it was only 300, but he adds that they have no idea of figures. Considering that Hicks' men had each 200 cartridges, that there were twenty guns, and plenty of shell, and that it was not until the ammunition was all, or nearly all spent, that the massacre took place, the rebels must have suffered severely.

The Mahdi, after his victory, returned to Obeid, where a great religious ceremony took place to celebrate the event. The heads of the European officers were cut off and placed on spikes over the gates of the town.

Of the crushing nature of the blow inflicted by the defeat of Hicks' army, it is scarcely necessary to say more than a few words. It destroyed the only army which Egypt had ready to put in the field. It increased the prestige of the Mahdi enormously, and placed all the country, south of Khartoum, at his mercy.

Khartoum itself was in a situation of very great peril. Its garrison numbered only some 2000 men to man four miles of earthworks and keep in order 60,000 Arabs, of whom 15,000 were avowed rebels. Colonel de Cœtlogon, who was in charge of the troops at Khartoum, at once took measures for the defence of the town, and the calling in, as far as possible, of the outlying garrisons. Reinforcements were demanded from Cairo, but there were no troops available. Fortunately 2000 old soldiers forming the garrisons withdrawn from Fashoda arrived, and to that extent strengthened the Khartoum force. In the meantime a panic prevailed, and all the Europeans began to take flight.

Happily the Mahdi did not follow up his success, but remained in the neighbourhood of Obeid for several weeks, occupied probably in dividing with his followers the spoils of the victory.

CHAPTER IX.

ABANDONMENT OF THE SOUDAN.

Proposed Reduction of Army of Occupation—Mr. Gladstone on the Soudan
 —Abandonment advised—Retention of Army of Occupation—Refusal
 of English Government to send Troops—Objections to the Abandonment
 —Proposed application for Turkish Troops—Pressure put upon Egypt
 —Change of Ministry—Nubar Pasha.

ON the 31st October, 1883, at the suggestion of Cherif Pasha, it was resolved that the British Army of Occupation, which now numbered 6700 men, should be reduced to a total force of 3000 men and six guns, to be concentrated in Alexandria. Speaking of the change proposed, Ministers declared that by the 1st January following the last British soldier would have left Cairo.

How far this prediction was destined to be verified will be seen later on.

On the arising of trouble in the Soudan the question was submitted in Parliament to Mr. Gladstone whether or not Her Majesty's Government regarded the Soudan as forming part of Egypt, and if so whether they would take steps to restore order in that province. Mr. Gladstone enigmatically replied that the Soudan 'had not been included in the sphere of our operations, and we are by no means disposed to admit without qualifications that it is within the sphere of our responsibility.'

On the 19th November, Sir Evelyn Baring wrote to Lord Granville that bad news was expected from Hicks Pasha, and if his force were defeated Khartoum would probably fall into the hands of the rebels. The Egyptian Government had no funds to meet the emergency, and

it was not improbable that the Egyptian Government would ask Her Majesty's Government to send English or Indian troops ; or would send part of Sir Evelyn Wood's army.

On the 20th Sir Evelyn Baring was informed that the British Government could not lend English or Indian troops, and advised the abandonment of the Soudan within certain limits. This was at once communicated to Chérif Pasha.

On the 22nd news had reached Cairo of the destruction of Hicks' army. The political consequences of this disaster will be seen from what follows.

On the 24th Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed that the recent success of the Mahdi was a source of danger to Egypt proper, and that the danger would be greatly increased if Khartoum fell, which seemed not improbable.

On the 25th Lord Granville telegraphed that, under existing circumstances, the British force in Egypt should be maintained at its present strength, and in view of the alarming condition of the Soudan, informed Sir Evelyn Baring that the Egyptian Government must take the sole responsibility of operations in that country.

On the 3rd December Sir Evelyn Baring, in submitting his views to Lord Granville, expressed a hope that Her Majesty's Government would adhere steadfastly to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Soudan. As a natural outcome of this policy, it appeared to him that neither English nor Indian troops should be employed in the Soudan, and that Sir E. Wood's army, which was officered by English officers on the active list, should, as was originally intended by Lord Dufferin, be employed only in Egypt proper.

On the 13th Lord Granville again telegraphed that

Her Majesty's Government had no intention of employing British or Indian troops in the Soudan. They recommended the Khedive's Ministers to come to an early decision to abandon the territory south of Assouan, or at least of Wady Halfa.

On the 14th Sir Evelyn Baring reported as to the immediate steps necessary if the policy of abandonment recommended were carried out. As it was impossible to say beforehand what the effect on the population of Egypt proper would be, he recommended that Her Majesty's Government should be prepared at a short notice to send a couple of battalions, war strength, from the Mediterranean garrison, and that immediate steps should be taken to bring the force of the Army of Occupation up to its present strength.

On the 15th December intelligence was received from Tokar that the garrisons were nearly out of ammunition, and that the rebels were constantly attacking them. They were also attacking Sinkat, but had been beaten back by Tewfik Bey. Attempts made to get provisions into the town had failed, and the report stated that only six weeks' provisions were left.

On the 16th Sir Evelyn Baring informed Chérif Pasha that Her Majesty's Government had no idea of sending English or Indian troops to the Soudan, that Her Majesty's Government would not object to the employment of Turkish troops exclusively in the Soudan, with a base at Souakim, if they were paid by the Sultan. He added that Her Majesty's Government recommended the abandonment of all the territory south of Assouan, or at least of Wady Halfa, and that they were prepared to assist in maintaining order in Egypt proper, and in defending it and the ports of the Red Sea.

On the 20th Sir Evelyn Baring was authorised to inform Chérif Pasha that Her Majesty's Govern-

ment adhered entirely to the policy which they had laid down with regard to Egyptian affairs, which had been interrupted owing to the destruction of Hicks' army in the Soudan, and they were of opinion that ineffectual efforts on the part of the Egyptian Government to secure their position in the Soudan would only endanger its success. Her Majesty's Government adhered to the advice given on the 13th inst. with regard to the course which should be pursued by Egypt in view of the disaster which had occurred in the Soudan.

The advice given to yield up the Soudan was most unpalatable to the Egyptian Government, and Chérif Pasha communicated to Sir Evelyn Baring his objections in a *note verbale* dated 21st December.

In forwarding the note Sir Evelyn added he felt sure that under no amount of persuasion or argument would the present Ministers consent to the adoption of the policy of abandonment. The only way in which it could be carried out would be for him to inform the Khedive that Her Majesty's Government insisted on the adoption of this course, and that if his present Ministers would not carry out the policy, others must be named who would consent to do so.

On the 2nd January, 1884, Chérif wrote to Lord Granville that the former had already pointed out the necessity imposed on the Government of His Highness of retaining the Upper Nile, and the pressing need they had of obtaining the temporary assistance of an armed force of 10,000 men, with a view to opening up the Souakim-Berber Road. The news which reached them from Baker Pasha confirmed the opinion that the means at their disposal were inadequate for coping with the insurrection in the Eastern Soudan. Under these circumstances, and taking into consideration that they could not get any help from Her Majesty's

Government as regarded the Soudan, the Government of His Highness found itself compelled to apply to the Porte, without delay, for a contingent of 10,000 men to be sent to Souakim. If His Majesty the Sultan should not see fit to comply with this request, the Government of His Highness had determined to notify to the Porte their retrocession to the Empire of the administration of the shores of the Red Sea and of the Eastern Soudan.

The reply was not long in coming. On the 4th January Sir Evelyn Baring was informed that in important questions, where the administration and safety of Egypt were at stake, it was indispensable that Her Majesty's Government should, as long as the provisional occupation of the country by English troops continued, be assured that the advice which, after full consideration of the views of the Egyptian Government, they might feel it their duty to tender to the Khedive, should be followed. It should be made clear to the Egyptian Ministers and Governors of provinces that the responsibility which for the time rested on England, obliged Her Majesty's Government to insist on the adoption of the policy which they recommended, and that it would be necessary that those Ministers and Governors who did not follow this course should cease to hold their offices.

The alteration in the tone adopted by Lord Granville will not fail to strike the reader. Formerly it was advice, now it was command.

On Lord Granville's despatch of the 4th January being communicated to Chérif Pasha, he at once resigned.

Nubar Pasha, on being applied to, agreed to undertake the formation of a native ministry, and declared that he accepted the policy of Her Majesty's Government in regard to the Soudan, although he would wish to retain Souakim.

On the 10th the Decree appointing the new Ministry was signed.

Nubar Pasha, the new President of the Council of Ministers, is one of the most conspicuous characters in Egyptian history.

He came to Egypt some forty years ago, as a *protégé* of Boghos Bey, the Minister of Mehemet Ali. After accepting various minor posts under the Government, Nubar in 1865 became the chief of the Railway Administration. Nubar, however, possessed talents which were destined to raise him to a position more exalted than the comparatively obscure one of head of the Railways, and he speedily became Ismail Pasha's Prime Minister, and must with him share a fair proportion of praise and blame.

Regarding Nubar's history impartially it is difficult to deny that while more really in earnest and far-seeing in his projects than Ismail, he was equally indifferent as to the means by which money was obtained to work them. At the same time it is certain that the execution of nearly every good project that emanated from Ismail is due to Nubar. The success of the negotiations by which the concession in regard to the Ouady lands, granted by Saïd Pasha to M. de Lesseps, was annulled, was due to Nubar.

He was the Minister by whose agency Ismail, after difficult and intricate negotiations, succeeded in obtaining the title of Khedive, the change in the order of succession and practical independence, at the price nevertheless of a large increase in the tribute.

Nubar, however, has still greater claim to fame in having brought to a successful issue the scheme for the International Tribunals, whereby the former system under which seventeen Consuls each claimed exclusive jurisdiction in regard to their subjects, was,

to a great extent done away with, and natives in disputes with Europeans made subject to the new courts.

Nubar, it will be remembered, was the President of the Council of Ministers, in the Cabinet in which Rivers Wilson and De Blignières were also members. He was assaulted by the military rabble, and with his colleagues was ignominiously dismissed by Ismail Pasha.

Shortly after, when it became obvious that England and France at all events were determined that the reforms inaugurated by the Nubar-Wilson Cabinet should not be allowed to perish, Nubar used his great talents and influence to secure the deposition of Ismail and the substitution of Tewfik as Khedive.

Except the ex-Khedive there is probably no one who possesses such complete knowledge of Egypt, its laws, its people, and its taxation, as Nubar Pasha.

An Armenian by birth and a Christian by religion, Nubar possesses an intelligence far superior to that of other Egyptian statesmen.

That he should have found himself able, in spite of his independent ideas and somewhat dictatorial habits, to accept the formation of a Cabinet at this epoch, is a remarkable proof of his far-seeing capacity, and adaptability to circumstances.

CHAPTER X.

REVOLT IN THE EASTERN SOUDAN.

Emissaries of the Mahdi at Sinkat—Osman Digna—His Repulse at Sinkat—Tewfik Bey defeats the Rebels—Defeat of Egyptian Troops—Sinkat Besieged—Operations against Tokar—Defeat of Mahmoud Pasha—Souakim attacked—Defeat of Egyptian Troops on their way to Tamanieb—Tokar surrounded—Reinforcements from Cairo and Alexandria—General Baker appointed to command—Baker's Instructions—Help required for Tokar—Baker at Souakim—Departure at Trinkitat—Bivouac of the Troops.

DURING the course of the preceding events troubles were arising in the Eastern Soudan.

Early in the month of August 1883, considerable excitement was caused at Souakim by the news that some emissaries of the Mahdi had arrived at Erokowit, near Sinkat, in the Eastern Soudan, and were raising the tribes. At the head of the movement was a man destined to play an important part in the succeeding operations. This was Osman Digna.

Osman Digna was the grandson of a Turkish merchant and slave-dealer, who settled in the Eastern Soudan in the early part of this century. His father had married a woman of the Hadendowa tribe, and Osman, in accordance with the tribal custom, assumed his mother's nationality. Osman and his brother Ahmed for some time carried on a thriving business in European cutlery, cottons, ostrich-feathers, and slaves, and their head-quarters were at Souakim. Ahmed managed the business at home while Osman, of a more restless and adventurous spirit, was the travelling partner,

and travelled far and wide, for the Dignas had branches or agencies at Jeddah, Kassala, Berber, Khartoum, Senaar, El Obeid, and Darfur.

His long journeys in the Soudan enabled him to become acquainted with the leaders of the anti-Egyptian movement, which, though not culminating in rebellion until the years 1881-2, was recognizable at least as early as 1869-70. About the last-named period the fortunes of the house of Digna began to decline, and in seven years it fell. Osman's brother filled for many years with no small profit to himself the office of Sheikh, but about this time was superseded by Chinawi Bey, a wealthy merchant, originally from Jeddah.

Osman Digna and his brother sustained serious losses in the capture by a British cruiser of one or two cargoes of slaves on their way to Jeddah from a creek near Souakim; and it is said that Osman's brother was captured in charge of one cargo in the year 1877. Then came the Anglo-Egyptian Slave Convention, which completed the alarm and disgust of the slave-dealers, and the commercial ruin of his house led Osman to schemes of rebellion.

In 1882 he went to the Red Sea coasts, in the vicinity of Sinkat, thence inland to Khartoum, where he is believed to have had an interview with the Madhi, who had proclaimed his divine mission the previous year. Osman then threw in his lot with the new Prophet, and in the spring of 1883 offered to serve the new cause in the Red Sea territories, and was appointed 'Emir,' or Lieutenant, to the Mahdi, in the Eastern Soudan. He was joined by his brother Ahmed from Souakim, who, before starting, sold all the Digna property in the place, and held high rank under his brother Osman. Eventually all the tribes in the Eastern Soudan went over to Osman Digna.

On the 5th of August these rebels, about 2000 strong, headed by Osman Digna, attacked Sinkat, but were repulsed with a loss of over 100 killed. It was at this time reported from Tokar that the tribes in the neighbourhood of that town were joining those round Sinkat with the object of attacking Souakim.

On the 9th of September Tewfik Mohammed, the Governor, who with a force of 200 men had advanced as far as Habub on the road to Erokowit, the rebel head-quarters, was attacked, but succeeded in repulsing the enemy, who left ninety dead behind them on the field of battle.

On the 16th October 160 Egyptian troops, on their way to reinforce Sinkat, were attacked in a defile by 150 men belonging to the rebel tribes near Sinkat, and, with the exception of twenty-five, all killed. This unfortunate affair put in the possession of the rebels 150 rifles and some ammunition.

Osman, leaving Sinkat to be besieged by the tribesmen, who, after this success, were joining his cause day by day, moved down to Tamanieb, about nineteen miles from Souakim. Osman then commenced operations with a view to the capture of Tokar, sixteen miles from Trinkitat on the Red Sea coast.

On the 3rd November Mahmoud Talma Pasha, who had been appointed to the command of the troops in the Eastern Soudan, left Souakim with 550 troops in two Egyptian gun-boats for Trinkitat. The object of this expedition was the relief of Tokar, which also was besieged by the rebels.

The force landed on the 4th of November, and set out on the march at eight a.m., the cavalry in advance, and a mountain-gun in the centre. After an hour and a half's march the troops rested for twenty minutes, and when marching recommenced they were attacked by the Arabs. The Egyptian soldiers formed a square, and commenced firing. The left side of the square was broken

into by eight or ten Arabs. This created a panic amongst the troops, many of whom threw away their rifles without firing a shot, and a general stampede ensued. The Egyptian loss was eleven officers, 148 men, one gun, 300 rifles, and a quantity of ammunition. Amongst the killed was Captain Moncrieff, R.N., the British Consul at Souakim, who had joined the expedition. When last seen Moncrieff was stabbed in the thigh by an Arab, whom he afterwards shot, but the Captain was at that moment struck fatally in the back by a spear. The singular part of the affair is that the attacking force only amounted to 150 or 200 men.

This disaster created a panic at Souakim, where only a thousand troops remained for the purposes of defence. So little confidence was felt in them, that arms were served out to the civil population.

On the 17th November Suleiman Pasha, the Governor-General of the Eastern Soudan, left for Massowah to obtain 400 black soldiers to be employed for the relief of Tokar and Sinkat.

The town of Souakim was attacked on the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th November, the rebels not passing the outside forts. Early on the 2nd December, they attacked the friendly Hadendowas, who were encamped about 2000 yards in front of the town. The whole of the attacks were nearly bloodless, but weakened the influence of the Government greatly.

On the 2nd December the black troops having arrived were sent with an expedition, comprising a total force of 700 men and one mountain-gun to Tamanieb, between Souakim and Sinkat, and three hours' march from the former place. About noon, when passing through a defile, the Egyptian force was surrounded by the rebels and cut to pieces. On being attacked the Egyptians formed a square, but after firing only ten rounds the square was broken. The black soldiers

fighting back to back made a desperate resistance, but being unsupported by the rest of the force their efforts were unavailing. Out of 700 men comprising the expedition only thirty-five escaped. The rebel force was at first estimated at only 400 men, but later accounts showed that it must have been not less than from 2000 to 3000.

Information was now received that Osman had concentrated a force 7000 strong on the Tamanieb Road, that Sheikh Taka had surrounded Sinkat with 11,000 men, and that the rebels at Tokar numbered 3000.

Fears began to be entertained for the garrisons of Tokar and Sinkat, as they were known to be in want of provisions, and the Souakim troops refused to go to their relief.

In this threatening state of affairs no alternative remained but to despatch reinforcements from Cairo and Alexandria. The difficulty, however, was how to provide them; after much consideration the Egyptian Government decided to despatch an expedition to Souakim.

General Valentine Baker Pasha was appointed to command it. Amongst his officers were Major-General Sartorius Pasha, Chief of the Staff, and second in command; Lieutenant - Colonel Harrington, Lieutenant-Colonel Hay, on the Staff; Major Harvey, A.D.C. to General Baker; Major Giles, commanding Turkish Cavalry; Major Holroyd, commanding Turkish Infantry; Colonel Abdul Razak Bey, Major Izzet Effendi, Egyptian army; Morice Bey, Paymaster-General; and Dr. Leslie, late Head of the Turkish Red Cross Medical Department.

The following is a translation of the Khedive's letter appointing Baker to the command:—

'Cairo, 16th December, 1883.

'GENERAL,

'Having confidence in the high military capacity which distinguishes you, I have nominated you to take command of the operations which have for their object the pacification of the region lying between Berber and Souakim, and the maintenance of communications between these two points. In entrusting you with this mission, I have to acquaint you with my general views upon the conduct of these operations.

'In carrying out this mission, you should use every means of conciliation and diplomacy, with a view to secure the obedience and submission of the Sheikhs of the different tribes before having recourse to force. To the gendarmes actually at Souakim will be added the black battalions under the command of Zubeir Pasha, who will be placed directly under your orders, and whose well-known influence among the tribes of the Soudan you will not fail to utilise. The command, with civil and military powers of all parts of the Soudan which you may reach, is conferred upon you; and this command implies the right to inflict the penalty of death after the sentence of a court-martial or of an ordinary Tribunal, according as the culprits are military or civil. The power of declaring any town or district in a state of siege is likewise conferred upon you.

'Such are, General, my principal views respecting the operations which you have to direct. I have full and entire confidence in your tried capacity, in the devotion which you have never ceased to manifest to me, and I hope for the best results from the mission which I now entrust you with.

'MEHEMET TEWFIK.'

The Khedive who appeared to have some misgiving as to the General whom he was entrusting with the command of the expedition, or as to the character of the forces, also sent Baker a private letter in which the former said:—

'The mission entrusted to you, having for its object the pacification of the regions designated in my above-mentioned Order, and the maintenance, as far as possible, of communication between Berber and Souakim, I wish you to act with the greatest prudence on account of the insufficiency of the forces placed under your command. I think it would be hazardous to commence any military operation before receiving the reinforcements which shall be sent to you with Zubeir Pasha. Whilst awaiting these reinforcements you should devote yourself to raising the tone and courage of the soldiers, and assuring the safety and defence of the town of Souakim. If, in the event of the

situation improving, you should consider an action necessary, I rely on your prudence and ability not to engage the enemy except under the most favourable conditions.'

On the 11th of December Colonel Sartorius arrived at Souakim with 650 of the gendarmes. In order to protect the place some English vessels of war, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir W. Hewett, were stationed off the town, and from time to time fired a few rounds of shell at the rebels' position. On the same day a letter was received from the Commandant at Tokar to the Governor-General of the Soudan, in which the former says:—

'The private letter you wrote on the 1st December reached me the same day. Its contents I thoroughly understand. Although I have begged for assistance from the first until now, you have not responded. The assistance of troops that I asked for you have not offered.

'Even though you have not offered me the assistance I asked for, you might have answered my letters.

'I have received letters from you, indeed, but containing nothing but empty compliments. And now all our hopes are in the hands of God, as I see there is no help from anyone else. We have done our work like brave soldiers, but there is no one to support us. Now I beg of you to send at once whatever force you intend to.'

On the 17th December Baker started for Souakim ; on his arrival there he commenced negotiations with the various tribal chiefs, and met with some success.

On the 1st January, 1884, orders were given to Zubehr Pasha to prepare the 1st battalion to start for Souakim, and the next day they marched past before the Khedive preparatory to starting. The Minister of War wrote to Baker saying the battalion was ready to start immediately, but that no steamers having come back from Souakim it was not possible to despatch the troops.

On the 10th January Zubehr applied for 6000*l.* to pay the battalion prior to leaving. The Finance

Minister refused on the ground that all expenditure for the Soudan was stopped, but after considerable delay Nubar Pasha gave the necessary orders. Sir E. Wood desired Nubar to use his influence to get the Negroes to start without their families in order to have more room in the steamers, but the men declined to go without them, and Sir E. Wood was obliged to send the families also. Zubehr then requested that the battalion might not be sent to Suez, until a steamer had actually arrived there to take them on, as he anticipated difficulty in keeping his men in order, seeing that they had no discipline.

At length, on the 16th, six companies left with their wives and families; and on the 18th Baker started from Souakim to Trinkitat with the object of relieving Tokar.

A few days later orders were given to send down the 2nd battalion. This one was in a worse condition than the other. The officer commanding protested against going, as he said many of his men did not know how to put a cartridge in their rifles; but as Baker had written on January 8th asking for the immediate despatch of troops, drilled or undrilled, no delay was allowed, and the second battalion left on the 20th.

On the 9th Baker was instructed that such portion of his orders as gave him discretion to open the Souakim-Berber route westward to Sinkat by force was cancelled. He was also informed that, in case it should become necessary to use force in order to extricate the garrisons of Sinkat and Tokar, he might do so, provided he considered the troops at his disposal sufficient for the purpose, and he could reasonably count on success. He was further directed to continue to use every effort possible to open a route to Berber by diplomatic means.

The news of the intended abandonment of the

Soudan had a bad effect on such of the tribes as were disposed to submit. A proclamation which Zubehr Pasha, at the request of the Cairo Government, addressed to the rebel Sheikhs in the Eastern Soudan was presented to Osman Digna by Zubehr's nephew. The messenger was at once thrown into prison. He was, however, released after two days, and requested to inform Baker Pasha that the representative of the new Prophet would never be induced to submit.

Reinforcements were brought up to swell Baker's force from the Berber and Somali territories; a Turkish battalion from Cairo, some Albanians, and some Bashi-Bazouk cavalry. The troops were daily exercised in field movements. A gang of convicts, who worked in heavy fetters, was employed in the formation of a camp.

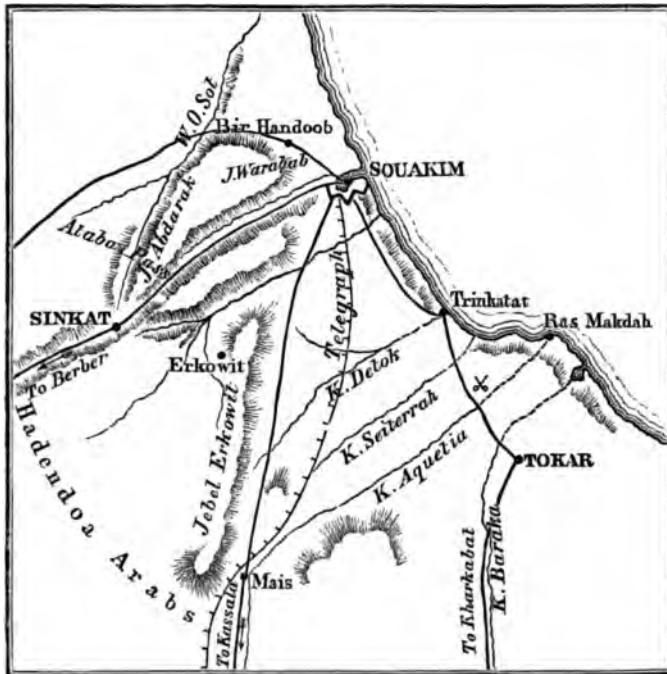
Baker had by this time collected a force of nearly 4000 men, and some Krupp and Gatling guns, and rocket-tubes. A large proportion consisted of the very Egyptian troops, against whom the Khedive had cautioned him. A certain part were policemen in uniform, ignorant of the merest rudiments of military drill, and most of the rest were simply fellaheen, whose unfitness as soldiers has been already referred to. The native officers were as disappointing as the men. With an army thus composed it is not surprising if gloomy forebodings prevailed as to the result of the expedition.

Leaving a force to garrison Souakim, Baker on the 1st February moved the rest of his army to Trinkitat, where entrenchments were thrown up for the protection of the stores. During this time the black troops were trained in rifle practice, and several cavalry reconnaissances were undertaken, notably one to the neighbourhood of some hills where Osman Digna was supposed to be lurking, and a large number of bullocks and sheep were captured.

By the 2nd the last of the troops and transports arrived at Trinkitat. On the same day a fort was constructed about three miles from Trinkitat to protect the guns and transport whilst crossing a morass lying between the sea and the main land. This was occupied by General Sartorius with 600 blacks, the remainder returning into camp.

On the 3rd the whole force, with the guns, marched out to the fort and bivouacked for the night. The force then consisted of 3746 men, composed as follows :—

Infantry.—Egyptian, 1300 ; Zubehr's blacks, 500 ; Soudanese, 900 ; Turkish, 400 ; Total, 3100. *Cavalry*.—Egyptian, 300 ; Turkish, 150 ; Total, 450. *Artillery*.—Four Krupps, two Gatlings, and two rocket-tubes, 150. Europeans, 46. These with camel-drivers, &c., made the force up to over 4000.



CHAPTER XI.

BAKER'S DEFEAT AT EL TEB.

The Advance—The Force surprised—Rout of the Troops—Courage of the Rebels—European Officers—Flight to Trinkitat—Incidents of the Battle—Egyptian Losses—Losses of the Enemy—Observations on the Battle—Embarkation of the Troops—Preparations at Souakim—The Town entrusted to Admiral Hewett—News of the Fall of Sinkat.

THE morning of the 2nd February, 1884, was dull with heavy showers. The troops were paraded before day-break. At 6.30 the force marched in the direction of Tokar. The formation was as follows:—Three infantry battalions in échelon, and marching in columns of companies; artillery and cavalry on the front and flanks; and cavalry vedettes extending all round at points a mile distant from the main body. The baggage, transported by 300 camels, was in the rear guarded by 200 blacks.

The country was open, but scattered here and there were patches of scrub and thorny mimosa bushes. The scrub grew thicker as the force advanced; but the ground was still sufficiently open for the operations of cavalry.

After the force had marched about six miles, shots were heard from the vedettes on the left front, and small numbers of the enemy were sighted in the distance right ahead. A halt was at once called. The scouts reported that the enemy was concealed in some bushes in advance of the left front. Twice a Krupp gun was brought up and some shells fired amongst them, causing them to fall back. The march was then resumed.

Bands of rebels were next seen on the ridges, both in front and towards the right, and in the latter direction a small body of horsemen, apparently scouts, appeared in sight about a mile off. Major Giles was ordered to charge them with the Turkish cavalry. This he at once did ; but after dispersing them, and wheeling towards the front, he suddenly came upon a large number of spearmen, who sprang up from out of the brushwood. Major Giles would have charged them, but his men, after their long gallop, were in too loose order ; there was no time to form, and nothing remained but to fall back upon the main body. As the Turkish cavalry retired, the mounted skirmishers and the Egyptian cavalry joined them, and the rebels followed close upon their heels.

Whilst this operation was being carried out, the enemy opened a musketry fire simultaneously on the front and both flanks. The force was taken by surprise, though warnings of what was coming might have been detected previously, as the vedettes on the left had for some time been drawing nearer to the main body. This, however, seems to have been overlooked. The scouts were now seen hastily retreating, and a large body of the enemy came swarming over the hills. The intention seemed to be to rush upon the army on all sides.

To repel the impending attack, Sartorius Pasha, who was in advance with Baker, was sent to form the infantry into a single large square, with the camels and baggage in the centre.

Two companies of the Alexandria battalion refused to obey orders, and stood like a panic-stricken flock of sheep ; but at length the infantry formed in front, on the left flank, and also on part of the right flank. On the remaining part, however, and also along the whole of what would have been the rear of the square, the

companies were a noisy confused rabble, the soldiers being mixed up with the camels and baggage in wild disorder.

This was the state of things when the enemy, numbers of whom had been concealed in the brush-wood, rushed down with loud yells, delivering their chief attack upon the left side of the square, and upon the left portion of the front line.

The frantic efforts of the Egyptians to get into proper formation, the confused din of orders, and the chaos in the rear, where 300 camels with the whole of the transport were struggling to force their way into the interior of the square, defy description. The square was formed eventually, but the rear side was but an irregular outbulging mass of horses, mules, camels, and men, tightly wedged together, and extending towards the centre.

The confusion was increased by the Egyptian cavalry skirmishers, who when the rush came, charged panic-stricken right into the square, many of them being shot by their comrades, who by this time were firing wildly in all directions.

The rebels were now rapidly encircling the entire force, which was delivering a tremendous fire mostly into the air. Under cover of the smoke the enemy made their rush. The Egyptian infantry on being attacked broke almost at once, rushing back into the centre of the square, and forcing the transport animals with them upon the rear of the Soudanese black troops. These last stood well for some time ; but after a while became demoralised by the rush of fellow-soldiers and camels from behind.

The right of the square was not at first assailed, and the men for some time kept up a continuous fire

towards the front, with the result of killing many of their own cavalry.* Into the gaps made in the square the enemy poured in hundreds, and at once all became panic and confusion. General Sartorius, who with his staff was inside the square, tried to rally his men. The task was a hopeless one.

At the time the charge was made on the left flank of the column, Baker with Colonel Hay and the rest of his staff were out with the cavalry in front. Upon riding back they found that the enemy had already got between them and the square. They at once charged, and cut their way through, but not without several of them being killed.

The General and Colonel Hay had a narrow escape from the spears thrown at them. On nearing the square the former had to run the gauntlet of the fire of the Egyptians in front, who, regardless of what was going on around, were blazing away before them. When Baker reached the square the enemy had already broken it up, and it was clear that all was lost. In eight minutes from the time of the Arab rush the whole force was in hopeless flight.

The scene on all sides baffles description ; of those inside the square very few escaped, they got jammed in amongst the mass of baggage-camels and had but a poor chance of firing or defending themselves.

The Egyptian cavalry were the first to run. They fired off their carbines into the air without taking aim at anything, and then bolted at full speed.

Sartorius and his staff, who with difficulty succeeded in extricating themselves from the square, were sent off by Baker to endeavour to get the flying cavalry to halt and make a charge. After shooting two of his men,

* Lieutenant Cavalieri, and probably also many other officers, were killed in this way.

Sartorius succeeded in effecting a momentary halt; but the instant his back was turned they were off again in full flight.

The Arabs displayed the most reckless bravery. One of them was seen charging alone a whole company of infantry. The Egyptians offered no resistance, and the rebels with their two-edged swords and spears were slaughtering them by hundreds. What had been the square was now a seething, surging mass of men and camels.

The Turkish infantry and European Police, who in spite of the rush had managed to get together near the guns, alone made a stand, and were annihilated almost to a man. The European officers, cut off from the main body by the rush of the Arabs, formed a little group apart, and were bravely defending themselves with their swords and revolvers.* Morice Bey, after he had received a spear-thrust through the side, killed no less than three of his assailants. An eye-witness who had spoken to him only a few moments before, wrote as follows:—‘I could see from the expression on his fine, handsome, resolute face that he was fully prepared to meet his own fate, and fully conscious of the doom that awaited the majority of those who were still living.’ When last seen alive, he was standing in the left front face of the square alongside the camel conveying the 400*l.*, of which he was in charge, and reloading his revolver, whilst he waved on his men.†

* A correspondent wrote of them that ‘their quiet demeanour was as a ray of light and of Divine hope in that hell of fierce triumph and of clinging despair.’

† Morice Bey who held the post of Inspector-General of the Egyptian Coastguard, had volunteered for Baker’s Expedition. On his receiving his appointment to the latter, he wrote to a friend as follows:—‘I have eaten the salt of Egypt for seven years, and I cannot desert her in her hour of need.’

Near Morice Bey, and close to the guns,* were Surgeon Leslie, Captain Forrestier-Walker, and Lieutenant Carroll. When last seen Dr. Leslie was sabreing the Arabs who swarmed over and under the wheels of the Gatlings, and Forrestier-Walker was shooting his men as they attempted to run from the guns. All four remained at their posts until speared by the rebels.

All around, the scene was simply one of savage massacre. The Egyptians, paralysed by fear, turned their backs, submitting to be killed rather than attempt to defend their lives; hundreds threw away their rifles, knelt down, raised their clasped hands, and prayed for mercy.

The rebels displayed the utmost contempt for their opponents. They seized them by the neck, or speared them through the back, and then cut their throats. One Arab was seen to pick up the rifle thrown away by a soldier and brain him with his own weapon. Another rode in among a crowd of retreating Egyptians, hacking and hewing about him with his long sword. An Egyptian officer whom he attacked, instead of defending himself, raised his shoulders to his ears, and lay down over his horse's neck. In that position, with his hands grasping the mane, he meekly took the blows of his assailant until the latter was killed by a shot from an English officer's revolver. The yells of the Arabs, and the cries of the victims, are described as appalling.

After having made his ineffectual effort to stop the cavalry, General Sartorius ordered Lieutenant Maxwell to gallop after them, already in full flight to Trinkitat, and try to rally them. Maxwell overtook them. He gave his instructions to the Egyptian officer

* So sudden and rapid was the enemy's onset that only a single round was fired, the Egyptian gunners bolting instantly afterwards.

in command. The latter would not even try to get his men together. He refused thrice. Maxwell then shot him through the head. He succeeded in rallying some forty or fifty men ; but another band of fugitives coming up, swept them off as in a deluge.

The road back to Trinkitat became nothing but a long line of fugitives. The men not only threw away their arms and accoutrements, but even great part of their clothing, in order to get away the faster. Officers were seen to shoot their own men for the sake of obtaining their horses. Colonel Hay himself shot an officer who had done this.

A large body of rebels in an extended line followed the flying soldiers at a steady trot, stabbing them through the back as they overtook them ; some few of the Soudanese who had retained their rifles occasionally turned and fired as they retreated. The rebels did not seem to have many fire-arms, and only a very few mounted men, who contented themselves with riding down stragglers without coming to close quarters with the main body of the fugitives. The latter were too overcome by terror to resist. As the pursuers neared them, they threw themselves screaming on the ground, and were speared or sabred one after another.

This frightful carnage lasted during a pursuit of upwards of five miles.

Many gallant actions were performed by the European officers, who engaged in hand-to-hand struggles with the Arab spearmen while being pursued by them to Trinkitat. Major Harvey saved his European servant, when exhausted in the flight, by placing him on his own horse, he running on foot beside it.

Captain Goodall had a narrow escape covering the retreat, receiving a spear-thrust which was turned by his sword belt-hook ; his assailant fell with a

revolver bullet through the head. Lieutenant Maxwell and Mr. Francis Scudamore, *Times* correspondent, in their flight, overtook Lieutenant Barton, who, having lost his horse, was running on foot. Lieutenant Barton was quite worn out. Maxwell invited him to get up behind him, which he did; but the horse, besides being wounded, was scarcely up to the weight of two riders. The horse came to a dead stop, and the Arabs were coming. Scudamore then gave his own horse to Barton, remarking, 'You are done up; I am light and can run.' Barton mounted, and Scudamore, seizing Maxwell's stirrup, ran alongside, and all three escaped.

The enemy pursued right up to Fort Baker, as the fortification on the mainland side of the lagoon was called. The garrison left to defend the work had long since taken flight. Sartorius and the surviving English officers, formed a cordon across the narrow neck of land. Their purpose was to stop all but the wounded, but the endeavour failed. The fugitives in hundreds rushed on, many of them in a state of absolute nudity. The cavalry positively refused to obey the orders of the English, their own officers having already fled to Trinkitat. They even threw away their saddles, and turned their horses loose, making the rest of their way to the beach on foot, in order that they might not be sent out to fight again.

Fortunately, the enemy did not follow up the pursuit beyond Fort Baker, otherwise scarcely any of the army would have escaped. Baker was one of the last to return to the fort. More than once an Arab spearman was within a foot of him: one man made two spear-thrusts at the Pasha, and failing both times to reach him, hurled his spear at him, the weapon passing just behind Baker's back. He, with his Chief of Staff,

Colonel Hay, only escaped death by charging through the rebels in his path. Finding it impossible to rally any of the men at the fort, Sartorius was sent on to man the lines of Trinkitat, in order to protect the embarkation. Arrived at Trinkitat, he succeeded to some extent in manning the lines with the few men in whose hands rifles remained.

The Egyptian soldiers ran pell-mell towards the boats, which, had they not already been aground, would have been sunk by the numbers who crowded into them. Many of the men waded into the sea in their eagerness to get off to the transports. It was only by firing upon them with revolvers that the officers could induce them to return to the shore, and wait for their turn to embark. The first troops ordered on board were those who possessed no arms. Stores and horses were with great difficulty, on account of the breakers, embarked during the night on board the various steamers waiting in harbour. Baker and Sartorius, and the other English officers, remained on shore to superintend the embarkation; not one single Egyptian officer of any grade stayed on shore.

Although there were indications of the presence of the enemy no attempt at attack was made.

The total number killed in the battle was 2373, out of a force numbering altogether 3715.

The following European officers were killed:—

Morice Bey, Captains Forrestier-Walker, and Rucca, Lieutenants Carroll, Smith, Watkins, Cavilieri, Bertin, Morisi, and De Marchi, and Dr. Leslie.

The corps which lost most heavily in proportion to their numbers were the European police, which, out of a force of less than 40, lost 35 men and 2 officers, and the Turkish infantry, which, out of 419, lost 352 men and 16 officers.

Four Krupp guns and two Gatlings were left in the hands of the enemy. As each man carried 100 rounds of ammunition, and 100 more were in reserve, at least half a million cartridges, as well as 3000 Remington rifles and carbines, were also captured.

The enemy's losses were at first estimated at about 1000, but it is obvious that they must have been much under that figure, for there was little real resistance. A later estimate of 350 would probably be nearly correct. Indeed, the whole of the rebel force was reckoned by the English officers as not more than 1200, and Baker Pasha has put them as low as 1000.

It is difficult to avoid seeing that some blame for the disaster attaches to Baker. He knew, or ought to have known, the composition of the troops he commanded, and that the short training they had undergone was insufficient to render them fit to take the field. There was, it is true, the pressing necessity for relieving the garrisons of Tokar and Sinkat. But against this was the express warning from the Khedive 'to act with the greatest prudence.' What the force under his command was worth had been shown in the course of their drill at Souakim. To take such men into action was then simply to court disaster. Again, the preparations to avoid a surprise were lamentably insufficient.

The question whether or not Baker was surprised has been much discussed. One thing is clear. If he were not surprised, his army undoubtedly was. As already mentioned, the enemy rushed in before there was time to properly form the square. It has been argued that it could not be a surprise, because the enemy were sighted more than a mile off, and fired at as well. The obvious answer is, that if they had been

sighted and fired at twenty miles off, it would have made the matter no better, if, after all, the rush found Baker unprepared. The more abundant the warning, the heavier the blame upon those who failed to profit by it. There may possibly have been no surprise, in the sense of the enemy jumping up out of the bush when nobody dreamt of their existence. But to deny that the enemy were upon the force before the latter was prepared to receive them,—that, in short, the battle was lost before the men had time to defend themselves, the most ardent admirer of the General will hardly attempt. There was either a surprise, or a state of ‘unpreparedness.’ One horn of the dilemma is as unpleasant as the other.

Again, as the square formation was the one upon which the fortune of the day was supposed to depend, it was strange that Sartorius was not upon the spot to direct its execution. Instead of this, he was half-a-mile in front with the head-quarters’ staff, the infantry being left in charge of three or four Egyptian Colonels, in whom, as he had admitted, he never had the slightest confidence.

Within three or four minutes after he rode down to form square, General Sartorius exclaimed, ‘The attempt is hopeless, the day is lost.’

Further, military critics are of opinion that even with disciplined troops the formation of 3000 men into a single square was a hazardous experiment. The infantry might have been drawn up in three écheloned squares. Each of these would then have been capable of giving support to the others. If one square had been broken, the others might have stood firm. The Turks, as their behaviour showed, might have been trusted to hold fast in a square of their own. A large proportion of the blacks would certainly have had more confidence had they been

drawn up by themselves. But the mixture of Turks and blacks with the cowardly Egyptians was inevitably fatal. Moreover, the very size of the square constituted a danger to its stability. Even with good troops, Baker's arrangements would probably have led to failure. But with an army mainly composed of impressed slaves and the sweepings of the Cairo and Suez bazaars, the only result could be destruction.

Disastrous as the result was, it is probable that had the Arab assault been delivered five miles further on the march toward Trinkitat, the annihilation of the Egyptian force would have been as complete as that which befell Hicks Pasha's ill-fated column.

The day after the battle it was ascertained that the rebels had already occupied Fort Baker, and they could be seen removing the booty from the front.

The men on board the ships were better pleased at the prospect of being sent home again than if they had won a great victory, and apparently felt no disgrace whatever at their defeat.

The transports, with Baker, Sartorius, and the remainder of the troops on board, arrived at Souakim on the night of the 5th February.

The news of the disaster created a panic in Souakim. In order to provide against an attack by the rebels, and also to preserve order in the town, Admiral Hewett, on the 6th, landed a party of blue-jackets and marines with Gatling guns. With the remnant of Baker's troops, nearly 3000 men were available for the defence of the town, but the majority were completely demoralized. In every part of the town and on the road to the camp were heart-rending scenes, women and children weeping for husbands and fathers killed in the late battle. Even for the purpose of holding Souakim, the Egyptian troops could not be relied upon, whilst the

town people, becoming infected with religious mania, threatened to turn on the Europeans.

On the 9th it was decided to declare Souakim in a state of siege, and to give the British officers full powers, military and civil, over the town. The Egyptian Government were at the same time notified that in the event of Souakim being attacked it would be defended by a British force.

On the same day spies from Sinkat brought a letter from Tewfik Bey to the effect that the garrison having eaten the camels, and even the cats and dogs, were subsisting on the roots and the leaves of trees.

The force at Souakim was now employed working day and night strengthening the entrenchments and fortifications. A further force of marines and blue-jackets landed from the fleet, occupying the new barracks which had been made in the centre of the lines. This was surrounded by a trench, and made impregnable. The advanced lines, about a mile in length, were to be manned in case of an attack by Egyptian troops. As a means of preventing the latter from running away in the event of an attack, the communication between the lines to be held by them, and the rest of the works was so arranged that it could be immediately cut off, in which case it was hoped that the Egyptians, having no alternative, might be induced to stand their ground.

On the 10th of February the charge of Souakim was handed over by Baker to Admiral Hewett, and the troops numbering some 3800 strong were paraded. At the same time a proclamation was posted in that town announcing that the Admiral had taken over the command.

On the 12th the news reached Souakim of the fall of Sinkat. It appears the rebels surrounded the place and demanded the submission of the garrison. Tewfik

Bey, with the courage which had marked his conduct throughout, declined to lay down his arms, replying that he preferred death to submission. He then sallied forth with 450 half-starved men, and attacked the rebels, killing a large number. He was finally overpowered, and the whole of his force annihilated. Tewfik seemed to have fought most bravely himself, and after expending all the cartridges of his Remington carbine, defended himself with his sword.

Only five men escaped the general massacre, and all the women except thirty were sold as slaves.

CHAPTER XII.

GORDON'S MISSION.

General Gordon Pasha, his History—His Instructions, his plan of operations—Arrival at Khartoum—Proclamation as to Slavery.

WE now arrive at the period when the abandonment of the Soudan being decided upon, the British Government confided to General Gordon the task of extricating the Egyptian garrisons scattered throughout the country. In dealing with this branch of the subject the space available in the present work will not admit of more than a concise summary of events. The subject has, however, been so exhaustively dealt with by other writers, that the abbreviated account given in the following pages will probably be found sufficient for the general reader.

Charles George Gordon was born on the 28th January, 1833. Gazetted to the Royal Engineers in 1852 he took part in all the operations in the Crimea, including the first assault of the Redan. In 1860 he left for China, where he shared in the advance on Peking. In the spring of 1862 he was summoned to Shanghai to check the advance of the Taepings, and in March 1863 was appointed to the command of 'the ever victorious army.'

Of Gordon's exploits in the Chinese service it is unnecessary to dwell at any length. The Emperor bestowed on him the post of Commander-in-Chief, with the decoration of the yellow jacket and peacock's feather. The British Government promoted him to the rank of

Colonel, made him a C.B., and in 1865 he returned to England.

In 1874, as already stated, Colonel Gordon succeeded Sir Samuel Baker in the Soudan. Offered 10,000*l.* a-year salary, Gordon would only accept 2000*l.* Landing at Souakim he crossed the desert to Berber, paid his first visit to Khartoum, and pushed up the Nile to Gondokoro, in September. He began by conciliating the natives and by breaking up the slave-stations. He continued Governor-General for a period of eighteen months, during which time he accomplished miracles.

When he arrived, there was a fort at Gondokoro, and one at Fatiko, 200 miles to the south, miserably garrisoned by soldiers, who dared not venture out half-a-mile for fear of being slaughtered by the natives. When he left he had established a chain of stations from the Soudan up to the Albert Nyanza, and rendered the communication between them perfectly safe. He had, moreover, succeeded in restoring peace to the tribes of the Nile Valley, who now freely brought their produce to these stations for sale. He had checked the slave-trade on the White Nile, and secured a revenue to the Khedive's exchequer, without having recourse to oppression. He had been the means of establishing satisfactory relations with King M'tesa, the powerful ruler of Ugunda, had mapped out the White Nile from Khartoum almost up to the Victoria Nyanza, and had opened water communication between Gondokoro and the lakes.

In October 1876, Gordon, judging that he had done enough for the Soudan, started northward, halted at Cairo to request Chérif Pasha to inform the Khedive that he intended quitting his service, and on the 24th December reached London.

Egypt, however, had not yet done with him. Gor-

don remained only a short time in retirement before he was again called to Egypt. In February 1877 Ismail Pasha made him not only Governor-General of the Soudan, but of Darfur and the Equatorial Provinces, a country 1640 miles long and 660 miles broad.

Gordon hastened to Khartoum, the seat of his new Government. It was time. The Soudan had been drained of Egyptian troops for the support of the Sultan in his war with Russia. Darfur was in revolt, and its garrisons were beleaguered.

Arrived at Khartoum, he at once set to work to overthrow every tradition of Oriental rule. In less than a month he revolutionised the whole administration, abolished the courbash, checked bribery, fitted up a box to receive the daily petitions of all classes, arranged for a water-supply for the city, and commenced the disbandment of the Turks and Bashi-Bazouks, who, instead of acting as a frontier guard, favoured the passage of slave-caravans.

In February 1878 he was summoned by telegraph to the Egyptian capital to lend his aid in arranging the finances of the country which had fallen into hopeless confusion. Reaching Cairo on the 7th March, he was received with every honour, and placed at dinner on the Khedive's right hand. He now fell into disfavour with the Egyptian Government. He was too much in earnest and spoke out too openly, and within a month started off in quasi-disgrace to inspect the south-eastern Provinces of his government. After dismissing an old enemy, Raouf Pasha from the governorship of Harrar, he made his way back to Khartoum by Souakim and Berber, and for months remained engaged in settling questions of finance and the affairs of the province.

In July 1879 Gordon received the news of the Khedive Ismail's deposition, and started at once for

Cairo. He told Tewfik, the new Khedive, that he did not intend to go back, but he nevertheless accepted a mission to Abyssinia to settle matters with King Johannes. Physically worn out by his exertions, he came to England for a time, visiting on his way thither the ex-Khedive at Naples, whose guest he was for eight days.

On the appointment in May 1880 of Lord Ripon to the Governor-Generalship of India, Gordon accepted the post of private secretary to the Earl, but resigned it on the 3rd of June, feeling, as he expressed it, 'the hopelessness of doing anything to the purpose.'

On the invitation of the Chinese authorities he soon afterwards left India for China, between which country and Russia differences had arisen, and successfully exerted his influence in the maintenance of peace, and left China the following August.

In the spring of 1881 Gordon went to the Mauritius as Commandant of the Royal Engineers, remaining for a year, when he was made Major-General. In the following May he proceeded to the Cape to aid the Colonial authorities in solving the Basuto difficulty.

Shortly after his return to England he left for Palestine, where he spent a year in retirement outside Jerusalem, devoting much time to proving, to the horror of pious tourists, that the commonly received 'holy places' were not the right ones after all, and working out the scheme of the Jordan Canal.

He then undertook a mission to the Congo River for the King of the Belgians, and only relinquished his post on the British Government requiring his services in the Soudan. Opinions in Egypt were much divided on the subject of Gordon's mission and his chances of success. His courage, energy, and disinterestedness were beyond all doubt. There were, however, certain uncertainties,

not to say eccentricities, in his character, which led many persons to question whether he was a fit person for the task to which he was called. That he had formerly an immense influence over the tribes of the Soudan was unquestioned. But people remembered that years had passed away since that period, and argued that Gordon, returning to the Soudan with half-a-dozen followers, would not be the Gordon of Ismail's time, backed by his *prestige* and at the head of a powerful armed force. The difficulty, however, was to find anyone else. It was Gordon or nobody, and the critics were compelled to shake their heads and hope all would be for the best.

Gordon's original instructions were dated the 18th January, 1884. He was to proceed at once to Egypt, to report on the military situation in the Soudan, and on the measures which it might be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons and for the safety of the European population in Khartoum. He was to consider and report upon the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan, and upon the manner in which the safety and the good administration by the Egyptian Government of the ports on the sea-coast could best be secured. He was also to give especial consideration to the question of the steps that might usefully be taken to counteract the stimulus which it was feared might be given to the slave-trade by the insurrectionary movement and by the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority from the interior. He was to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government might desire to entrust to him. He was to be accompanied by Colonel Stewart.

Gordon received new and more extended instructions from Sir Evelyn Baring, at Cairo, on January 25th. The following are their salient passages :—

'It is believed that the number of Europeans at Khartoum is very small, but it has been estimated by the local authorities that some 10,000 to 15,000 people will wish to go northward from Khartoum only, when the Egyptian garrison is withdrawn. These people are native Christians, Egyptian employés, their wives and children, &c. The Government of His Highness the Khedive is earnestly solicitous that no effort should be spared to ensure the retreat both of these people and of the Egyptian garrison without loss of life. As regards the most opportune time, and the best method for effecting the retreat, whether of the garrison or of the civil populations, it is neither necessary nor desirable that you should receive detailed instructions.

'You will bear in mind that the main end to be pursued is the evacuation of the Soudan. This policy was adopted, after very full discussion, by the Egyptian Government, on the advice of Her Majesty's Government. It meets with the full approval of His Highness the Khedive and of the present Egyptian Ministry.

'You are of opinion that the "restoration of the country should be made to the different petty Sultans who existed at the time of Mehemet Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist;" and that an endeavour should be made to form a confederation of those Sultans. In this view the Egyptian Government entirely concurs.

'A credit of 100,000*l.* has been opened for you at the Finance Department, and further funds will be supplied to you on your requisition when this sum is exhausted.'

Gordon's final instructions were given him by the Egyptian Government in a firman appointing him Governor-General. By this firman he was empowered to carry into execution the evacuation of the respective territories and the withdrawal of the troops, civil officials, and such of the inhabitants as wished to leave for Egypt. He was if possible after completing the evacuation to take steps for establishing an organized government in the different provinces.

The significance of the alteration in Gordon's instructions will be perceived from Lord Granville's remark at the close of his summary of General Gordon's new duties, in a despatch of March 28, that 'Her Majesty's Government, bearing in mind the exigencies of the occasion, concurred in these instructions,' which

virtually altered General Gordon's Mission from one of advice to that of directing the evacuation not only of Khartoum, but of the whole Soudan, and also of establishing an organized government. From that moment Gordon's functions were transformed.

Gordon left Cairo on January 26, 1884.

His programme was as follows :—1. To get down to Egypt all Egyptian employés, their families, and belongings. 2. To replace these Egyptian employés by native Soudan officials under himself, thus forming the foundation of the future government of the Soudan. 3. To concentrate the neighbouring tribes against the Hadendowas, and to open the roads from Souakim to Berber and Souakim to Kassala. 4. To relieve Senaar and the triangle between Blue and White Niles. 5. To send up an expedition of five steamers to bring down the families of the troops of the Equatorial Provinces and Bahr Gazelle. 6. To arrange at Dongola for the exodus of those who remained in Darfur.

For this programme he stated that he needed five officers to assist him. Only a day or two later Gordon altered his mind and telegraphed postponing his request for English officers.

Gordon arrived at Khartoum on the 18th February. He held a levée at the Mudirieh, the entire population being admitted. On his way between the Mudirieh and the Palace about 1000 persons pressed forward kissing his hands and feet, and calling him 'Sultan,' 'Father,' and 'Saviour of Kordofan.' General Gordon and Colonel Stewart at once opened offices in the Palace, giving admittance to every one with a grievance and giving all a careful hearing. The Government books, recording from time immemorial the outstanding debts of the overtaxed people, were publicly burned in front of the Palace. The courbashes, whips, and implements

for administering the bastinado, were all placed on the blazing pile. Gordon created a native council of the local notables. Then he visited the hospital and arsenal. With Colonels Stewart, and De Cœtlogon, and the English Consul, he visited the prison, and found it to be a perfect den of misery. Two hundred beings loaded with chains lay there. They were of all ages, boys and old men, some having never been tried, some having been proved innocent, but left in prison for over six months, some arrested on suspicion and detained there more than three years, others merely prisoners of war, and one a woman, who had spent fifteen years in the prison for a crime committed when she was a girl. Gordon at once commenced to demolish this Bastille. Before it was dark scores of wretches had had their chains struck off. In the evening the town was in a blaze of illumination, the bazaar being hung with cloth and coloured lamps, and the private houses decorated. There was a display of fireworks by the population, who indulged in rejoicings till after midnight. The *Times* correspondent telegraphed, 'The people are devoted to General Gordon, whose design is to save the garrison and for ever leave the Soudan—as perforce it must be left—to the Soudanese.'

Gordon's next act was to issue a proclamation repealing the existing laws against slavery. The following has been given as a translation :—

'Proclamation.—To all the inhabitants.—Your tranquillity is the object of our hope. And as I know that you are sorrowful on account of the slavery which existed among you, and the stringent orders on the part of the Government for the abolition of it, and the punishment of those who deal in slaves, and the assurances given by the Government for its abolition, seizing upon and punishing those concerned in the trade; according to Imperial decrees, and the firmans forwarded to you—all this is known to you. But henceforward nobody will interfere with you in the matter, but every one for himself may take a man into his service

henceforth. No one will interfere with him, and he can do as he pleases in the matter, without interference on the part of anybody; and we have accordingly given this order. My compassion for you.

‘GORDON PASHA.’

As a good deal of indignation has been expressed at this step, it is only fair to give Gordon's explanation both as regards the Proclamation and the subsequent application for the appointment of Zubehr, the most notorious slave-dealer in the country.

Gordon in his ‘Diary’ says, ‘Was it not announced that the Soudan was going to be abandoned, and consequently that the Soudanese were going to be allowed to follow their own devices (which are decidedly slave-huntingly inclined)? What possible influence could my saying that that feeble Treaty of 1877 was not going to be enforced have on people who were going to be abandoned?’

CHAPTER XIII.

GENERAL GRAHAM'S EXPEDITION, 1884.

Effect of Disasters of Hicks and Baker in England—The Tokar Relief Expedition—General Graham appointed to command—Departure of the Expedition—Message to the Mahdi—Disembarkation at Trinkitat—News of the Fall of Tokar—Graham's Instructions—Advance to Fort Baker—Composition of Graham's Force.

THE defeat of Baker's force following, as it did, the annihilation of Hicks' army, created a most painful impression in England.

The situation was this—two armies led by English Commanders and officered in great measure by Englishmen had been successively destroyed. Of the garrisons of Sinkat and of Tokar, one was known to have been sacrificed, and the other might share its fate any day; Souakim itself was seriously threatened.

With regard both to Hicks' and Baker's expeditions the Government was severely attacked both in and out of Parliament.

Of the character of the force which Baker had assembled at Trinkitat, the British Ministers had full information. Before it started there was a consensus of opinion that it was foredoomed. The special correspondent of the *Daily News* telegraphed on February 1st, 1884, that 'Baker Pasha's force was unequal to the task of the relief of Sinkat, and if the troops whose chiefs have visited our camp prove faithless, Sinkat will be lost.' The *Standard* correspondent sent telegrams to the same effect. On February 1st the *St. James's Gazette* said 'there was a very bad

chance for Baker Pasha ;' while the *Spectator* declared that 'the chances against the success of the expedition were as three to one.' The *Times* did not think Baker Pasha's enterprise a too hopeful one, considering the class of men of which his force was composed, and added that it would be a calamity if the fate of Hicks' expedition were to be risked again after a warning so recent and solemn. Opinion amongst military men, both in Egypt and at home, was to the same effect.

And yet Baker, like Hicks, was allowed to lead his rabble on to destruction. England, it was true, had declared that it took no responsibility as regards the despatch of Hicks' army ; but England at the time of both disasters was omnipotent in Egypt. The country, bound hand and foot, was in the hands of the British Government. Under these circumstances to permit was to do. The existence of power involved responsibility. The so-called Government of the Khedive after the events of 1882 was a shadow. England had only to advise, and Egypt to obey. Nevertheless the Egyptian Government was permitted to send forth two wretchedly equipped expeditions, one to Kordofan and another to Souakim ; both almost inevitably doomed to destruction.

The situation was not rendered more pleasant by the reflection that whilst Baker was sent with an impossible army to perform what, with his force, was a hopeless task, a British army capable of accomplishing with ease all that was wanted remained idle in its barracks at Cairo.

The shortsightedness of British policy was shown by the fact that this very force had after all to be despatched to accomplish what Baker had failed to do. Unfortunately, however, it was destined, like many other operations recorded in this work, to be too late.

Public opinion had been especially moved by the news of the fall of Sinkat, and the massacre of its brave

defenders, and it was felt that an effort should be made to save, if possible, the garrison of Tokar from a similar fate. For this purpose it was decided that a British force should be sent to Souakim.

The force to be employed was to be chiefly drawn from the Army of Occupation in Egypt, and General Stevenson was instructed by telegraph to make the necessary preparations. He was informed that the object of the expedition was to relieve the Tokar garrison if it could hold out, and if not to take any measures necessary for the safety of the Red Sea ports. He was to select the three best battalions under his command, and these, with the Royal Irish Fusiliers (then on their way from India), and a battalion of marines, were to form an infantry brigade. The garrison of Alexandria was to be removed to Cairo while the expedition lasted, and orders were sent to the fleet to hold Alexandria temporarily. The 10th and 19th Hussars, the Mounted Infantry, and any trustworthy native horsemen at Souakim, were to constitute the mounted force. The 19th Hussars were to be mounted with native horses taken from the Egyptian cavalry under Sir Evelyn Wood. The baggage was to be on the lowest possible scale, as the troops ought to be back in Cairo in three weeks. Tents were to accompany the force to Souakim or Trinkitat, as the case might be. The greatest publicity was to be given to the determination to relieve Tokar by British soldiers.

Messages were despatched to the garrison at Tokar, urging them to hold out, as relief was on the way, and the expedition was hurrying forward with all possible speed.

The command of the expedition was given to Major-General Sir Gerald Graham, who had led the Second Brigade at Tel-el-Kebir. Generals Davis and Redvers Buller were to accompany him.

Every effort was made to send off the expedition as early as possible. The troops from Egypt embarked at Suez and proceeded to Souakim and Trinkitat. The 19th Hussars left on the 18th in the *Neæra* and *Osiris*. The 6th Battery, 1st Brigade, Scottish Division, Royal Artillery, equipped with mountain-guns, went in the *Rinaldo*. The Royal Highlanders (Black Watch), the 26th Company Royal Engineers, and 100 Mounted Infantry, left Suez on the 16th in the *Orontes*. The 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps sailed the same day in the *Bokhara*. The *Thibet* left on the 16th with the Gordon Highlanders. Of the troops stopped on their way from India the *Jumna* brought the 10th Hussars, with the M Battery 1st Brigade Royal Artillery, and the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers. The York and Lancaster Regiment from Aden was ordered to disembark at Trinkitat. Detachments of marines from the ships of the Mediterranean Squadron were also told off to accompany Graham's force.

The reorganized Egyptian Army under Sir Evelyn Wood was anxious to take part in the expedition, but the British Government declined to sanction this, on the ground that the Egyptian army was expressly raised for the defence of Egypt proper, excluding the Soudan.

General Graham was engaged on a tour of inspection on the Nile when he received his appointment, and at once proceeded to Souakim.

He left Suez with his head-quarters on the 18th February.

Meanwhile Admiral Hewett had communicated with Osman Digna and warned him that a British force was going to relieve Tokar, and at the same time informed him that the English Government wished to avoid useless bloodshed, and would not interfere with the tribes if they did not oppose the expedition. Osman Digna

replied that he felt himself obliged to take Tokar, and must, therefore, fight the English, and the responsibility for any bloodshed, he added, would rest with the latter.

On the 22nd of February an Egyptian soldier, who escaped from Tokar, stated that the garrison was then going over to the rebels, and that the Commandant was treating for capitulation on the following day. Spies who arrived subsequently said that they could not approach Tokar owing to the presence of the rebels in the vicinity.

On the 24th, whilst the British forces were disembarking at Trinkitat, news was received that Tokar had already fallen.

As to the precise manner in which this was brought about some little mystery exists, but so far as can be ascertained the circumstances attending the fall of Tokar appear to have been as follows. The garrison had for some time been harassed by a continual fire kept up by the Krupp guns and rifles in the hands of the rebels. The soldiers were despairing of relief, and the officers more or less disaffected. The bulk of the inhabitants were in favour of a surrender. According to some accounts, the Governor for some while resisted their importunities. According to others, he was only too willing to hand over the town to the besiegers. In any case, negotiations were on the 19th opened with them through a merchant in Tokar, who had been imprisoned by the authorities as a sympathiser with the Mahdi, and who was now despatched as an emissary to the rebel camp. The surrender was fixed for the next day. The emissary returned to Tokar the same evening accompanied by 100 rebels who were admitted to the town. One officer and a few soldiers still wanted to fight, but they were over-ruled by the others, who preferred ceding the town to Mussulmans rather than to Christians. During the night such soldiers as remained loyal escaped from the town, and several of

them journeying by night made their way to Souakim. The next day the town was finally surrendered.

There seems to have been no valid reason for giving up Tokar, there being an abundance of provisions, and 45,000 rounds of ball cartridge left. Although the town had been shelled and exposed to a heavy rifle fire for five days, the total loss suffered during the bombardment was only two men killed and twelve wounded out of a garrison of 300 men. The rebel force numbered less than 1000.

Some doubt was at first felt as to the correctness of the news of the surrender of Tokar. In any case the Expedition was now at Trinkitat, and it was resolved not to countermand it.

On the 26th Graham was instructed that, in the event of Tokar having fallen, the main object would be to protect Souakim. The next day Mr. Gladstone stated in Parliament that the Cabinet saw no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report of the fall of Tokar.

Notwithstanding this, it was decided to continue to push on with Graham's expedition.

The real reason for this decision is not altogether clear. Probably the truth is that the British Government was unwilling that the preparations which had been made should be in vain. Possibly, also, it was desired that the army, being on the spot, should strike a blow at Osman Digna before coming away. From a despatch sent to Graham on the 24th February it would seem that the objects to be attained by persevering with the Expedition were to march on El-Teb, to protect any fugitives, and to bury the English dead, after which it was to return by land to Souakim. These objects it was still in General Graham's power to attain.

Notwithstanding the report of the surrender of Tokar,

Graham determined to push on to that place from Trinkitat.

On the 26th, after a preliminary reconnaissance by the Hussars and Mounted Infantry, the Gordon Highlanders and Royal Irish Fusiliers moved across the lagoon and took possession of Fort Baker. From early morning the enemy had shown in considerable numbers in the vicinity of the fort, but as the troops advanced the former fell back. A number showed in force on the ridge nearly two miles distant. Upon the cavalry advancing, they still held their ground and opened fire at long range ; but it being evident that a yet larger force was still behind the ridge, it was not considered advisable to charge.

The two succeeding days were occupied in transporting a supply of water and three days' provisions for the whole army.

On the 27th the enemy massed some two miles off, and, numbering about 2000 strong, kept up continuous firing on the English sentries and outposts. A last effort was now made to treat with the rebels. Major Harvey, accompanied by Colonel Burnaby, rode with an escort to the rising ground two miles distant. Here he planted a white flag with a letter attached to the staff, enjoining the troops to disperse and to send delegates to Khartoum to consult with General Gordon as to the settlement of the Soudan provinces. The enemy maintained continuous firing at the party, but, after it had withdrawn, took the flag and letter, but left no reply.

On the afternoon of the 28th Graham and the remainder of the force proceeded to the fort and bivouacked for the night. Each man carried seventy rounds. No transport was taken.

The two infantry brigades were composed as follows :—1st Brigade under General Redvers Buller—

89th Royal Irish Fusiliers, 350 men, Colonel Robinson ; 75th Gordon Highlanders, 720 men, Colonel Hammill ; 60th King's Royal Rifles, 630 men, Colonel Ashburnham. 2nd Brigade under General Davis—42nd Black Watch, 730 men, Colonel Green ; 65th York and Lancaster, 450 men, Colonel Byam ; Royal Marines, 300 men, Colonel Tuson ; Naval Brigade (three Gatlings and three Gardner guns) 125 men, Commander Rolfe ; Royal Artillery (eight 7-pounders) 118 men, Major Lloyd. The Mounted Infantry, 150 men selected from the 42nd, 75th, 60th, and 31st regiments, under the command of Major Humphreys ; cavalry under General Stewart ; 19th Hussars, 430 men, Colonel Webster ; 10th Hussars, 250 men, Colonel Wood. Baker Pasha was Chief of the Intelligence Department, and was accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Major Harvey. Exclusive of transport, the whole force consisted of 206 officers, 4233 men, twenty-two guns, and six machine-guns. For transport there were 600 camels, with 350 mules and 100 camels for ambulance work. There was also a camel battery of eighty animals and 100 men.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRAHAM'S VICTORY AT EL-TEB.

The Advance of General Graham—Official Report of the Engagement of El-Teb—Further Details—Defeat of the Enemy—Operations of the Cavalry—Losses on each Side—The Enemy's Forces—Courage of the Soudanese—Incidents of the Battle—Bivouac of the Army—Arrival at Tokar—Burial of the Dead—Advance on Dubba—Return of the Troops to Souakim.

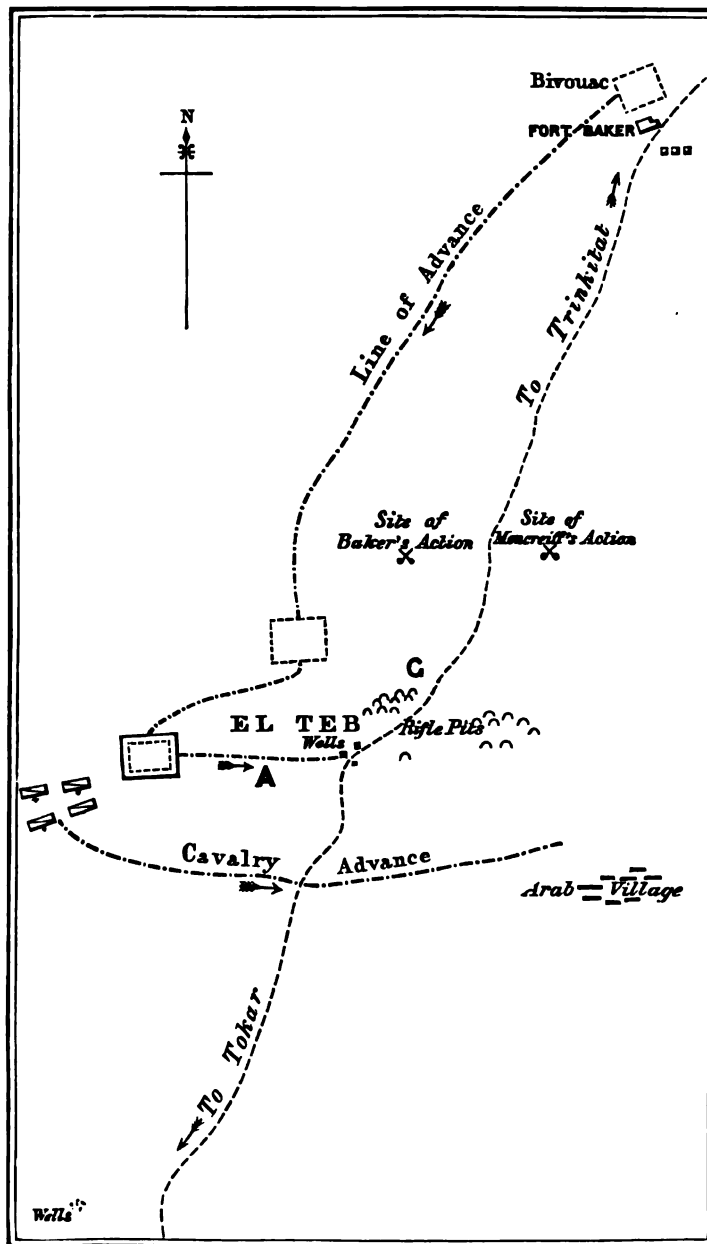
THE following is General Graham's official report of the engagement of the 29th February, 1884, at El-Teb, omitting only passages relating to the services of individual officers, and not of general interest :—

' At about eight a.m. I gave the order to advance in the formation of a rectangle, having an interior space of about 500 by 150 yards. In front were the 1st Gordon Highlanders, in rear the 1st Royal Highlanders, on the right the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers (supported by four companies of the 3rd King's Royal Rifles), on the left the 1st York and Lancaster, supported by 380 of the Royal Marine Artillery and Light Infantry.

' On the march, the front and rear faces moved in company columns of fours at company intervals, and the flank battalions in open columns of companies. Intervals were left at the angles for the guns and Gatlings, the Naval Brigade occupying the front, and the Royal Artillery the rear angles. The men marched off with their water-bottles filled, and one day's rations. The only transport animals were those carrying ammunition and surgical appliances, all being kept together in the centre of the square.

' To secure my base, I had left a company of the 3rd King's Royal Rifles, all sick and weakly men, and all departmental details armed, under Lieutenant-Colonel Ogilvy, and three companies of the same corps at Fort Baker, with a Krupp gun and two bronze guns manned by the Royal Marine Artillery.

' About an hour before daybreak, on February the 29th, there was a short but heavy fall of rain, which caused the ground for the first



BATTLE OF EL-TEB.

two miles of the march to be very heavy; the Naval Brigade and Royal Artillery dragged their guns by hand, so that frequent halts had to be made to rest the men.

'The front and left of the square were covered by a squadron of the 10th Hussars, the right by a troop of the 19th Hussars, the cavalry being in rear under Brigadier-General Stewart. About ten a.m. reports came in from the front that the enemy were entrenched on our left, on which I inclined the square to the right; but about 11.20 a.m. I found that we were immediately opposite to a work armed with two Krupp guns, whose position had not been reported to me by the reconnoitring party, so I moved the column still more to the right, on which the guns of the enemy opened fire with case and shell. Fortunately, the aim was bad, so that few casualties occurred, and I succeeded in getting on the left flank of the work, which was on the proper left rear of the enemy's line.

'The square was now halted, men ordered to lie down, and four guns of the Royal Artillery and machine-guns were brought into action at a range of about 900 yards; the practice from the guns was carried on with remarkable accuracy and great deliberation, and with the help of the machine-guns of the Naval Brigade, which poured in a stream of bullets, the two Krupp guns were completely silenced, as they were taken slightly in reverse, and the gunners were driven from the guns.

'The infantry now advanced, the square moving by its left face, which, by the flank movement, was opposite to the work attacked. The fighting line was, therefore, composed of the 1st York and Lancaster, supported by the Royal Marines; the 1st Gordon Highlanders and 1st Royal Highlanders moving in columns of fours on either flank, the rear of the square being formed of the 3rd King's Royal Rifles, and the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers. The York and Lancaster advanced steadily till within a short distance of the works, when, with a cheer, a rush was made to the front, and assisted by the blue-jackets on the right, who managed to bring their guns into the fighting line, the work was carried, and the guns captured. The enemy made several desperate counter attacks, sometimes singly, and sometimes in groups, on the advancing line, many hand-to-hand fights taking place with the York and Lancaster and men of the Naval Brigade.

'About 12.20 p.m., the battery, which is marked "A" on the accompanying plan, was taken, with two Krupp guns and a brass howitzer. At this period the cavalry, under Brigadier-General Stewart, moved round the present right flank of the square, and charged in three lines across the plain to its right front where the enemy were in large numbers, who attacked the flanks of the lines, so that they had to change front in order to shake them off. Colonel Barrow, of the 19th Hussars, was severely wounded in executing one of these charges, where, I regret to say, many other casualties occurred.

'The enemy, as reported by Brigadier-General Stewart, fought simply with fanaticism, and spared no wounded or dismounted men, although, in most cases, instantly paying the penalty with their own lives; and it is to the desperate character of the struggle that the large proportion of deaths in the cavalry brigade is to be attributed.

'The enemy were still in possession of the village and wells of Teb; but by the capture of the work on his left flank, my infantry had got in rear of his position, and the captured guns were turned on another work, also armed with two Krupp guns, which they took in reverse. These captured guns were admirably worked by the Royal Marine Artillery, and with the aid of the guns of the Royal Artillery, the enemy's remaining battery was soon silenced. The enemy's infantry, however, still clung with desperate tenacity to numerous rifle-pits, and entrenchments they had constructed, and large numbers occupied some buildings in the village, which were afterwards found filled with dead bodies; they seemed not to dream of asking for quarter, and when they found their retreat cut off would charge out singly or in scattered groups to hurl their spears in defiance at the advancing lines of infantry, falling dead, fairly riddled with bullets.

'About 2 p.m., the battery marked "G" on plan, now abandoned, was occupied and the whole position taken. The enemy had now given up all ideas of further fighting, and the last work on the right of their line was occupied by the Gordon Highlanders without opposition, as they streamed away in the direction of Tpkar and Souakim.

'Nothing could be better than the dash with which the charges of the cavalry were executed, in the midst of a horde of desperate fanatics, who displayed extraordinary activity and courage; nor could anything exceed the cool deliberation and efficiency with which the Royal Artillery served their guns under fire, or the skill and gallantry displayed by the Naval Brigade in keeping up with the front line of infantry, and protecting their own guns by hand-to-hand encounters with the enemy.

'The first time the square came under fire was a very trying one for young troops, as we were then moving to a flank, an operation at all times difficult, and especially so when in such a cramped formation. A slight disorder occurred, which was, however, speedily rectified, and nothing could have been better than the steady advance on the first battery.

'In advancing on the scattered entrenchments and houses, the formation became somewhat disordered, owing to the desire of the men on the flank faces of the square to fire to their front. The Gordon Highlanders speedily rectified this, moving one half battalion into the fighting line, the other half being thrown back to guard against flank attacks.

'The Royal Highlanders were somewhat out of hand. I would,

however, beg to observe that the ground was a most difficult one to move over, and that the desperate tenacity with which the enemy held a house on the right of the Royal Highlanders caused the men to form in an irregular manner so as to pour a converging fire on it.

'The other battalions, especially the York and Lancaster, which had several hand-to-hand encounters with the enemy, and the Royal Marines, behaved with great steadiness and gallantry.

'The 1st Gordon Highlanders, 3rd King's Royal Rifles, and 1st York and Lancaster, also showed steadiness and good discipline under fire; the latter formed the left flank of the fighting line in the attack on the second position, when they advanced with great gallantry.

'I append a list of killed and wounded, and deeply regret the numerous fatal casualties in the cavalry brigade, of which I have already made mention.

'The force of the enemy was difficult to estimate, and in my first telegram I put it at 10,000. Subsequent native testimony obtained, makes me estimate it at 6000 fighting men, and I am informed that they admit a loss of 1500 killed.

'In the immediate neighbourhood of Teb, 825 dead bodies were counted, and I am informed that it is the custom of these people to carry off their dead when practicable. I am also informed that the women of the tribes were present with hatchets to despatch our wounded.

'I must now beg to express my sense of the services of the officers holding responsible positions in the force I had the honour to command on this occasion, without whose loyal co-operation and self-devotion, the expedition could not have been carried out successfully.'

* * * * *

Referring to Brigadier-General Stewart, the despatch continues :—

'My instructions to him were to avoid engaging the enemy until their formation was broken, and until they were in full retreat. The time of making the charge I left entirely to Brigadier-General Stewart, as I wished to keep him well away from my square, not knowing on which side it might be attacked.

'We did not anticipate having to attack the enemy in an entrenched position, but thought he would come out and attack my square in large numbers, be repulsed, and then be cut up by the cavalry. The charges actually made were upon masses of the enemy not yet engaged with my infantry, and although most gallantly and skilfully executed, the loss of officers and men is to be deeply regretted.'

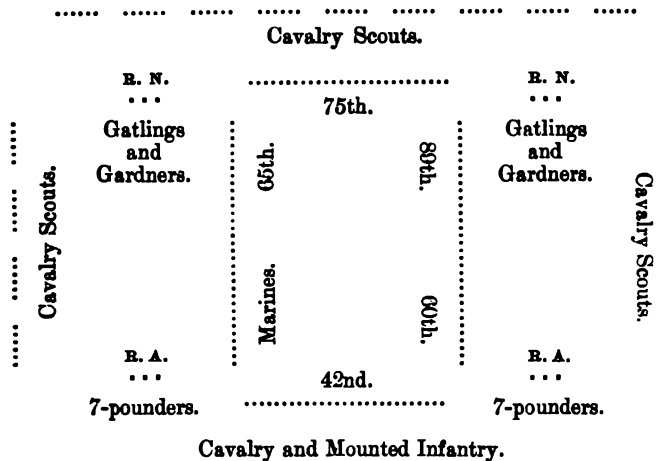
The success which General Graham attained with such slight loss of life must in great measure be attri-

buted to the skilful and judicious manner in which he chose his point of attack. By the turning movement, described in the General's despatch, his force was brought on to the left front, and rear of the enemy, who was by this means assailed in the most exposed part of his entrenchments.

These entrenchments had been thrown up at the village of El-Teb, the scene of Baker's defeat, eight miles south-west of Trinkitat, about half way between that place and Tokar, and seven miles from the sea-shore. The works, facing W. by N., comprised a long shallow embankment, somewhat semi-circular in form, defended by a battery on a mound, situated on the S. W. or Tokar side, and marked 'A' in the plan mounting two Krupp guns and a brass howitzer, and by another on the N. E. or Trinkitat side, and marked 'G,' mounting two Krupp guns, two brass howitzers, and one Gatling. All the guns were taken from Baker's force, and, as was afterwards ascertained, were worked by Egyptian gunners forming part of the garrison of Tokar. The battery on the N. E. side was roughly revetted in front with hogsheads and sacks, and had a ditch from two to three and a half feet deep on the east and west sides.

Half way between the two batteries was a brick building, the remains of a disused sugar-mill, and an old iron boiler. Rifle-pits were scattered about on two sides of the position. The pits were constructed to hold about twenty men each, and were scooped out of the sand in such a way that an attacking force coming in front might step right to their brink before becoming aware of their existence. In the rear of the position were the Wells, some twelve in number, and some reed huts forming the village of El-Teb.

The following diagram shows the order of march :—



As Graham's huge square, or rather rectangle, moved in a diagonal direction across the plain, it passed along the front of the entrenchments, in other words, with El-Teb on its left flank.

The line of Baker's route was between it and the enemy's position. The infantry was thus spared the unpleasant sight which the remains of his army presented. The Hussars, however, rode over the very spot. The air was polluted with the smell of the decomposed bodies. The first of them was met with about a mile outside Fort Baker. The course taken by the fugitives from the scene of the battle was marked by a belt about three miles in length, and less than 100 yards in breadth. Here and there, a few of the run-aways had managed to struggle from the line of flight to leave their bones in the adjoining bush. Most of the victims appeared to have fallen on their faces, as if speared or cut down by their pursuers from behind.

On the spot where Baker's square had been destroyed, the dead, in every attitude of painful contortion

lay piled in irregular heaps literally two and three deep, over an area of at least 300 yards. The bodies were all stripped, scarcely a vestige of clothes remaining. Of some only the bare skeletons were left, but for the most part the remains had not been attacked by vultures or wild animals, though all, or nearly all, had been savagely mutilated.

Just beyond this spot was a low mound covered with sticks, from which waved strips of calico of different colours. These marked the graves of the fallen rebels.

The ground over which Graham's force advanced consisted of low sand-hills thickly covered with bush.

During the march, H.M.S. *Sphinx*, off Trinkitat, fired four rounds, but the range was far too great, and as her shells were falling more than a mile short of the enemy's position, and, moreover, coming dangerously near the cavalry, she was signalled to cease firing.

Though not so stated in Graham's despatch, it appears that it was about 10.30, at the moment when the column had reached a point half-a-mile due west of the enemy's lines, and right opposite the battery 'G' on the Trinkitat side, that the Soudanese opened fire. At this spot the force was received by a brisk fire both of musketry and artillery. Graham's object was to pass the face of the enemy's position. Accordingly, without replying to the fire, he moved to his right, reaching at 11.20 the point where he reports the enemy having opened fire with case and shell from Battery 'A' on the Tokar side.

He continued moving to the right till he had reached the spot mentioned as being 900 yards from this last battery, and where the halt was made. During this movement, although the despatch is silent on the point,

a brisk fire was kept up not only from the Krupp guns, but from rifles as well, the Soudanese, according to one account, sending bullets by the hundred. The firing of the enemy's artillery was bad; but after a while the enemy's gunners appeared to have got the range, and the shells began to drop into the square. It was at this time that Baker, who had been attached to the Intelligence Department of the force, was wounded by a shrapnel shell,* and Lieutenant Royds, of H.M.S. *Carysfort*, received a bullet-wound from which he died the following day. About twenty men in all were hit.

The halt took place about noon, the infantry lying down so as to expose themselves as little as possible; whilst the guns opened fire on the battery 'A.' So effective was the reply made by the guns of the Royal Artillery, and the machine-guns of the blue-jackets, that in considerably less than half-an-hour the battery was silenced.

Then, with bagpipes playing, the square advanced by its left face on the works and met the Soudanese assault. Strict orders had been given that up to 300 yards volley-firing only was to be allowed, and independent firing after 100 yards, and this rule was well carried out.

As the entrenchments were neared the Soudanese, mostly armed with spears and huge cross-hilted swords, rose boldly up within 200 yards, and not waiting for the attack rushed for the front of the column at head-long speed. Onward they came, heedless of death, shouting and brandishing their weapons. They attacked in the same fearless manner as they did in the rush on Baker's force. The resistance they met was

* Baker lost much blood, but was with difficulty persuaded to dismount to have his face bandaged, and fifteen minutes afterwards he was again in the saddle.

very different. With bayonets fixed, Graham's men received the charge, pouring in as they advanced, a deadly fire from their Martinis. Right and left the enemy dropped under the hail of bullets from the rifles and machine-guns. The survivors, even when wounded, nevertheless rushed on to certain death. Many came on singly, all their comrades for yards around having fallen.

The 65th York and Lancaster Regiment and the Marines being then in front, had, with the blue-jackets at the corners, at first to bear the brunt of the assault. But as the action developed the infantry formation grew irregular so that the 42nd Black Watch, and portions of the 75th Gordon Highlanders, were exposed equally with the 65th to the onslaught of the enemy. It became a hand-to-hand fight, the soldiers meeting the Soudanese spears with cold steel. At one moment, borne back by numbers, the 65th recoiled some thirty or forty yards, leaving a corner of the square open. A few of the Soudanese got inside, but only to be at once bayoneted by the 65th. On the regiment falling back, the Marines advanced to their support and the square was again closed. The check was but momentary, and once more the square advanced, firing with great precision. The ground at this place was broken and difficult. The formation of the troops consequently became irregular, and gaps were left here and there in the square. A halt was therefore called to re-form the column and distribute fresh ammunition.

The Soudanese had been now over half-an-hour struggling to break the square, and began to hang back. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Graham's force resumed their advance upon the works. The enemy, however, were not yet beaten. They rested behind the hills a moment to concentrate their forces and again made rushes on the square, attacking on all sides simul-

taneously. Availing themselves of every inch of cover, they hid behind each hillock and bush, and when sufficiently near started up once more and made a dash for the column, only to be killed or driven back.

At length, the troops having partially cleared the front with their rifles, rushed with a cheer for the battery.

Colonel Burnaby who had his horse killed under him, and had been wounded in the arm, was the first to mount the parapet with some men of the Black Watch. He was armed with a double-barrelled shot-gun, a deadly and handy weapon at close quarters, and with this he wrought considerable havoc amongst the Soudanese hanging about the works.*

Another gallant act in the fort was that of Captain Wilson of the *Hecla*, who seeing a marine closely pressed rushed to his assistance, and while surrounded by five or six of the enemy broke his sword at the hilt in the body of one of them. The others closing round him, he tackled them with his sword-hilt. He received a sword-cut through his helmet, cutting the scalp.

In a few minutes the battery was taken, the two Krupp guns were wheeled round by the marine artillerymen, and directed upon the other battery 'G.' The Egyptian gunners had all been killed by the English fire, and it was said that their sergeant who had survived was killed by the Soudanese.

It was during the pause which followed the capture of the battery that Stewart's cavalry, apparently under the impression that the infantry had finished their work, executed the charge referred to later on. But the Soudanese were not yet in flight, and whilst the Hussars were occupied elsewhere, the in-

* According to Major Colwell, who was with the Marines during the attack, the Colonel killed no less than fifteen men.

fantry were engaged in their hardest task. This was the capture of the other battery 'G,' to effect which, the infantry had to fight its way to the left across the entrenchments from the southern extremity to the northern.

By this movement, the 42nd, Black Watch, entered into the front or attacking line. But in reality the square formation was broken up, so that the whole infantry division became an irregular semicircular line, with the 42nd and 65th, in the central and more advanced part of it, and the 89th and 75th on the wings. During this operation, the left half-battery of the Naval Brigade, moving by the rear of the 65th, took up a position on the left of that battalion, that is, in the corner between the 65th and 42nd. The right half-battery placed itself in the corner between the 42nd and the 89th.

The Arabs defended their remaining position with extraordinary determination. In front were the brick building and iron boiler already mentioned, and all around were the rifle-pits. The building had been loop-holed, and the Arabs were firing from within. Several shells were fired into it to dislodge them, but the guns were too small to effect a breach. At length Lieutenant Graham, with the Gatlings of the Naval Brigade, took the building, the sailors firing revolvers through the windows, whilst the Highlanders shot the enemy as they tried to escape. Men were observed hiding around the boiler, from which they would creep and rush with indomitable courage on the advancing line.* The rifle-pits, also, were full of the enemy's spearmen, who would lie low, pretending to be dead, till the first lines had passed, and then springing up do much mischief until killed.

By one o'clock, the enemy showed signs of retiring,

* This building was afterwards found to be full of bodies, and around the boiler no less than 160 Arabs lay dead.

and the British line, firing their Martinis and Gatlings, made for the northern battery 'G.' This was carried an hour later by two companies of the Gordon Highlanders led by Captain Slade. The rest of the infantry at the same time swarmed to the wells, the enemy gradually disappeared, and the battle of El-Teb was won.

To return to the cavalry under Brigadier-General Stewart. His instructions, according to the despatch of Graham already given, were 'to avoid engaging the enemy until their formation was broken, and until they were in full retreat.' Bearing this in mind, the question may well be asked, why did the cavalry charge at that particular stage of the action when the enemy's force was neither broken nor in retreat?

As, when the artillery have produced the first effectual impression on an enemy, the infantry advance to perform their task, so the cavalry strike in to complete the confusion and ruin caused by the infantry. But in this case, not only were the enemy not half beaten, but the charge was made, according to Graham's despatch, 'against masses of the enemy not yet engaged.'

It must be presumed that Stewart was led to believe that the Arabs were giving way, and that the moment had come for dealing them a final and crushing blow. It is impossible to say what influence (if any) the cavalry charge exercised on the fortunes of the day. But it may be argued that delivered, as the charge was, against a second and possible reserve force of the enemy, it was a timely and opportune movement. It is unquestionable that when the original assault was made on Graham's infantry, there was a second large body of Arabs hovering about on the south-west side of the wells on the way to Tokar. It is the habit of the Arabs to put their best men in front, and to reserve in the rear a second body to be let loose on their foes as soon as these last have been broken up. It is quite possible that

these were held in readiness in case of the break-up of the square to 'rush' the entrenchments and surround the infantry. If this were the intention, Stewart's charge must have materially interfered with it. To describe the charge :—

After the storming of the battery 'A' the cavalry was massed behind the left rear of the square, ready to act at any given point when necessary. At 12.20 p.m. as the square advanced, numbers of the enemy were visible in the plain beyond the ridge, and Stewart, swinging his force round the infantry's right, gave the order to charge. The cavalry were in three lines, the 10th Hussars under Colonel Wood, forming the first; the 19th Hussars under Lieut.-Colonel Barrow, the second; and one hundred of the 10th mounted, on English horses, under Lieut.-Colonel Webster, formed the third. This formation was maintained when the cavalry began to gallop, causing the enemy to split into two large bodies right and left.

After a gallop of three miles the first two lines overtook some of the Soudanese. Amongst them was a woman, though her sex was unrecognisable, who miraculously escaped through the first line unhurt. Being perceived and spared by the second she showed her gratitude by firing a rifle after the men who had saved her.

There was now only a small party of the enemy in front, and a halt was sounded. At this moment an orderly overtook Barrow, informing him that Webster was being 'cut up.'

That officer, after the first two lines had passed, had suddenly discovered away on his right a body of Arabs appearing out of the brushwood; a hundred, or, according to another account, two hundred, of these were mounted. They carried two-handed swords, and rode barebacked. In the rear of them were numbers of

spearman on foot. Webster wheeled his squadron to the right, and in a moment was engaged with a large force of the enemy.

On receipt of the orderly's report the word was instantly given, 'Right about wheel.' Barrow's two squadrons then became the front line, and Wood's the rear. As the two lines rode back to Webster's assistance they found themselves confronted by some hundreds of Soudanese, mounted and on foot. Some thirty horsemen rode with full force boldly against the first line of the advancing squadron. Three came straight through safely, and undismayed either by the shock they had survived, or the equal peril of the second line sweeping down upon them, wheeled their horses with wonderful rapidity, not hesitating to follow in full pursuit the squadrons whose superior power they had so narrowly escaped. Very little harm, however, resulted from this attack. The real opposition came from the spearmen who lay scattered among the hillocks and mounds of sand, and who, rising at the precise moment, attempted to hamstring the horses of the cavalry, or else drove home their heavy spears, throwing them whenever they were unable to reach their foe by hand. The spears were like Zulu assegais in form, except that, being weighted with a roll of iron at the extreme end of the shaft, they had a greater momentum and piercing power. The Arabs also threw their boomerang-like clubs of tough mimosa wood at the horses' legs, thus bringing many of the horses to their knees.

Barrow, whilst leading the charge, was struck by a thrown spear which pierced his arm and side. He, nevertheless, rode on until his horse was brought down in the manner above described.*

* Colonel Barrow's life was saved by Quartermaster-Sergeant Marshall, who caught him as he was falling, and seizing a loose horse belonging to a dismounted trooper, was, with the assistance of the latter, placing the Colonel

The first line, missing its commander, and not fully realising the position, swept straight on, whereas Barrow would no doubt have wheeled it to the right. Stewart, who was riding somewhat in advance of the left flank of the second line, noting at once the flaw, drove spurs into his horse, and with his staff galloped hard to bring round the erring squadrons. It was a race between this small band, the General and Staff, and a number of Arabs rushing from the right. The former won, and caught up the first line; but in this conflict, during the sweep of the 10th Hussars, as they followed, wheeling with admirable precision to the left, the chief casualties of the day occurred. Lieutenant Probyn, of the 9th Bengal Cavalry, attached to the 10th Hussars, was among the first to fall. Of the General's four orderlies one was killed and two were wounded. Major Slade fell dead, pierced with spear-wounds, and his horse hamstrung to the bone.* Another officer who perished at the same time was Lieutenant Freeman.

After the 10th and 19th had charged again and again through the scattered groups of Arabs doing but little execution on account of the unsteadiness of the Egyptian horses,† each line dismounted one of its squadrons, and poured volley after volley into the enemy; after which the Hussars rode back to El-Teb, having lost heavily, in fact, one man for every eight engaged.

on it when it fell. Marshall and the trooper then supported the Colonel through the scattered masses of the enemy. The danger run may be imagined from the fact that Barrow and a corporal of the 19th, named Murray, were the only two who, when unhorsed, escaped with their lives. Murray had no less than four horses, either speared, hamstrung, or clubbed—a circumstance almost unexampled.

* Major Slade was not missed until the cavalry had for some time been returning to the square. He is supposed to have been killed in an attempt to help Lieutenant Probyn. Twelve spear-wounds were found on his body.

† Most of these were wholly untrained, and the rest only understood one movement, viz., that of retreating in the presence of the enemy.

The loss in killed on the British side was four officers and twenty-six men ; in wounded, seventeen officers and one hundred and forty-two soldiers and marines. The officers killed were Lieutenant Freeman, 19th Hussars ; Major Slade, 10th Hussars ; Lieutenant Probyn, 9th Bengal Cavalry ; and Quartermaster Wilkins, 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifles.

The officers wounded were General Baker Pasha, severely ; Lieut.-Colonel Burnaby, severely ; Lieut.-Colonel Barrow, 19th Hussars, dangerously ; Captain Kelly, Staff, slightly ; Captain Wilson, Royal Navy, slightly ; Lieutenant Royds, Royal Navy, dangerously ; Brevet-Major Brabazon, 10th Hussars, slightly ; Captain Kellie, Royal Artillery, slightly ; Veterinary-Surgeon Beech, slightly ; Quartermaster Watkins, Irish Fusiliers, slightly ; Surgeon Turner, slightly ; Major Dalgetty, York and Lancaster Regiment, slightly ; Captain Little-dale, York and Lancaster Regiment, severely ; Lieutenants Gordon and Macleod, Royal Highlanders, slightly ; Captain Green, Royal Engineers, and Captain Wauchope, Royal Highlanders, Staff, slightly ; Captain and Adjutant Poë and Major Allen, Royal Marines, slightly ; Staff-Surgeon Martin, Royal Navy, slightly.

The magnitude of the loss sustained in the cavalry charge will be apparent when it is considered that out of a total of thirty killed no less than thirteen, or nearly half, belonged to the small force under General Stewart. It is singular that with the exception of the loss sustained by the cavalry all the casualties, during the fight, were caused by the enemy's bullets.

Of the enemy's losses several estimates were made. It is obvious that their total force was much under the figure of 10,000 originally reported by General Graham. Another authority puts the numbers who fought at the entrenchments and wells at 3000. In addition to

these was the force apparently held in reserve, and attacked by the cavalry. The enemy's force in this direction was probably 2000 or 3000 more.

It is stated in some of the accounts that 2000 were slain and 5000 put *hors de combat*! One correspondent states that a native who came in reported that 1500 were buried on the field of battle.

In any case the defeat was a conspicuous one, more especially considering the comparatively small loss sustained by Graham's force.

The chief lesson taught by the engagement is the tremendous power of the breechloader in steady hands. Against such weapons, carried by British soldiers, all the reckless courage of the Soudanese was of no avail. With the exception of one moment when the hurried advance of the front line threatened to imperil the square the enemy never succeeded in getting near enough to be a source of serious danger to the British infantry; and but for the cavalry attack, the utility of which is open to considerable doubt, the victory would have been won with almost a total immunity from loss.

The tribes who fought against Graham's force were the Hassanabs, Artegass, Gemilab, Hendawas, Hadendowas, Ashrabs, and Demilabs. Of these one tribe is said to have been totally exterminated. Their reckless courage in action was the theme of general admiration. Both during and after the fight their principal aim seemed to be to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Lads of twelve, after fighting desperately, fell dead into the shelter-trenches, with their teeth set and their hands grasping their spears.

It was almost impossible to save the wounded or to take prisoners, as the dying, even in their last throes, strove to thrust or cut with knife, lance, or sword. The troops as they pressed forward had to

shoot or bayonet all they came near, for the wounded would start up and strive to kill or maim their foes, a grim pleasure lighting up their faces whenever they could bury their weapons in a soldier's body.

A marine roving about among the enemy's dead, behind the boiler more than once referred to, was killed by a wounded Arab, hidden among the slain. The Arab with a knife fairly disembowelled the English soldier, and was himself bayoneted on the spot almost immediately afterwards.

Some time after the battle, and when the troops were searching about the enemy's works, a youth of about twelve years of age, unobserved among a heap of dead and dying, started up and rushed with a drawn knife on two English soldiers, who, taken aback at first, ran some yards, and then turned and shot him. At some distance outside the lines a Soudanese sprang like a cat upon the back of one of the soldiers and tried to cut his throat; an officer, rushing up, shot him through the heart with his revolver, barely in time to save the soldier's life.

The coolness of the British soldier seems never to have deserted him, and gave rise to some scenes which might almost be described as humorous. When the rush was made and the bulk of the assailants either killed or driven back, one Soudanese warrior, spear in hand, dashed singly forward. With a 'hop, skip, and a jump,' he cleared the front rank of the square, only, however, to be adroitly caught on the point of the bayonet of a soldier behind. 'How's that, sir?' said the soldier, turning to his officer. 'Well caught,' said the latter, involuntarily reminded of the game of cricket.

After the fighting was over, and in a comparatively quiet corner near the wells, one of the Soudanese suddenly ran for a black sergeant belonging to the Egyptian

army. The latter, unprepared for the onslaught, sought refuge behind his camel. Here he was pursued by his enemy, who tried every means to get at the sergeant. The latter was chased round and under his animal several times, to the amusement of a group of Highlanders, who looked on unwilling to spoil the sport. On went the chase, the two dodging around the sheltering camel, and it was uncertain who was to win when the Soudanese, with his long knife, proceeded to stab the camel. This attempt to secure an unfair advantage was too much for the Highlanders, two of whom took aim at the Soudanese. Their rifles went off at the same moment and the man fell. It was impossible to say which shot proved fatal, and a lively discussion ensued as to 'whose bird' the Soudanese was to be considered.

When the square was being assailed, a Soudanese, after being hit by a rifle-bullet, suddenly swerved towards one of the guns. A gunner saw him coming, snatched a rammer, and knocked him down with a blow on his head. Before he could rise the Soudanese was bayoneted. A trooper of the 10th Hussars, after his squadron had passed ahead of him, attacked a spearman, who parried his sword-thrusts with one of the hippopotamus-hide shields carried by most of the enemy. The trooper tried in vain to cut him down, but his horse was too restive to render this practicable. Hayes then coolly dismounted, and after parrying a sword-thrust, killed his opponent.

Admiral Hewett and Baker Pasha returned to Trinkitat late in the afternoon with a small escort of cavalry. General Graham, with the army, bivouacked at the wells that night, and started the next morning for Tokar, leaving behind 500 of the 42nd to guard the wounded and the supplies which had been brought up.

On the Mounted Infantry and a squadron of the 10th

Hussars nearing Tokar they were fired on by rebels from huts in the town and had to retire to the main column, which was some way behind; on its coming up Colonel Clery, the Chief of Graham's Staff, rode forward towards the town, when he discovered that the rebels had all fled; a soldier bearing a white flag came out, and it was found that the garrison had, as had been reported, capitulated previously, but their lives had been spared, and some of them even bore arms. On the English troops coming up the garrison professed to be overcome by delight, and came out dancing and shouting, and kissed the soldiers' feet.

The same day a party of the 42nd regiment was sent out to bury the Europeans who fell in Baker's defeat. All the bodies being stripped of every particle of clothes, it was most difficult to identify them; but twenty-five were distinguished, and of these the following could be identified with certainty, viz., Morice Bey, Dr. Leslie, Captain Forrestier-Walker, Lieutenants Watkins, Carroll, Smith, and Morisi, Donnebauer, clerk to Head-quarter Staff, Moscomas, dragoman to Mr. McDonald, special correspondent of the *Daily News*, and Wells, General Baker's groom. The others it was impossible to identify, one had white kid gloves on and his hands tied as though he had been taken alive and afterwards killed.

Of the Arabs who fell, only Abdul Rassak Bey, native Chief of the Staff, could be recognised. Morice Bey and Dr. Leslie were lying side by side inside the left front of the square with their faces towards the front. Walker and Watkins were also close together in the opposite corner. Human bones were found on the spot where Consul Moncrieff was killed, as pointed out by a black soldier who was present on the occasion.

A burying-party of sixty men from the steamers *Gafferiah* and *Tor* was also sent out to bury the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers of Baker's expedition.

The troops bivouacked in the plain in front of Tokar.

On the 2nd March the cavalry rode out to the encampment of the enemy at a place called Dubba, about three miles distant: here was found inside a zeriba a pile of 1500 Remingtons and knapsacks, also an arsenal containing munitions of war, entrenching tools and 50 bugles. To the right of the arsenal was a magazine containing 200 boxes of ammunition, one seven-pounder, and one Gatling. Outside was a hut evidently belonging to some sheikh, in which was stored the European loot taken from the killed at Baker's defeat, a most miscellaneous assortment, gun-cases, empty portmanteaus, writing-cases, surgical instruments, &c. Several of those who had been present with Baker's army recognised and recovered articles belonging to them. A party of Hussars broke up the whole of the rifles, and the other things of value were loaded on mules.

From the general appearance of the walls of Tokar it was evident that no serious attempt had been made against the town.

The day following the arrival of the troops many of the inhabitants who had fled when the rebels were fighting at El-Teb, or had gone off in company with them, returned with their families and property. A wounded Egyptian artilleryman said that he and seven others had been dragged with ropes from Tokar to El-Teb to work the guns. All the others were killed, and he, on trying to escape, was shot in the back by the Arabs, but managed to crawl to Tokar during the night. He stated that a great number of Arabs escaped in a wounded condition. According to this man and others, the rebels alleged that they were deceived

by Osman Digna, who told them it was untrue that the English were coming, and assured them that they would only have to meet and defeat another Egyptian army.

The troops then returned to Trinkitat, accompanied by 700 of the survivors from Tokar, and commenced to re-embark for Souakim on March 5th.

as everybody knew, except Graham himself, it was unjust. Its effect was apparent later on.

The following extracts from Graham's despatch briefly relate the subsequent events up to and including the battle of Tamaai :—

' At 6 p.m. on the 11th instant the artillery and infantry advanced to Baker's zeriba, about eight and a half miles, reaching it about 10.30 p.m. There was a bright moon, and the night air soft and pleasant, so that the march did not distress the men, although it was hard work for the Naval Brigade. The strength of the force was as follows :—

' *Royal Artillery*.—6th Battery 1st Brigade, Scottish Division. 7-pounder Camel Battery, under Major Lloyd : eight guns, seven officers, 100 non-commissioned officers and men, with 66 camels, carrying 90 rounds per gun. M Battery 1st Brigade, 9-pounder Battery, under Major Holley : four guns, three officers, 66 non-commissioned officers and men, with 52 mules, carrying 86 rounds per gun.

' *1st Infantry Brigade*.—Under Brigadier-General Buller, V. C., K. C. M. G., C. B. Royal Engineers under Major Todd, R. E. : five officers, 57 non-commissioned officers and men. 3rd King's Royal Rifles : 19 officers, 546 non-commissioned officers and men. 1st Gordon Highlanders : 23 officers, 689 non-commissioned officers and men. 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers : 17 officers, 326 non-commissioned officers and men.

' *2nd Infantry Brigade*.—Under Major-General Davies. 1st Royal Highlanders : 19 officers, 604 non-commissioned officers and men.* 1st York and Lancaster : 14 officers, 421 non-commissioned officers and men. Royal Marine Artillery and Light Infantry : 14 officers, 464 non-commissioned officers and men.

' General total of force of Artillery and Infantry, 116 officers and 3216 non-commissioned officers and men.

' The troops left in camp and garrison at Souakim consisted of the Cavalry Brigade and Mounted Infantry under Brigadier-General Stewart, with orders to join Infantry early next morning, and of the following details left to protect camp and town. 100 Royal Marines in the fort guarding the town, with five guns in position. Sick and weakly men left in charge of the camp, the tents being left standing.

' I appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Commandant of the base, under the orders of Admiral Hewett.

' At daybreak the Cavalry and Mounted Infantry watered at Souakim, and joined the force at Baker's zeriba about 7 a.m. Their strength was as follows :—10th Hussars : 16 officers, 235 non-com-

* Already in zeriba.

missioned officers and men. 19th Hussars: 19 officers, 343 non-commissioned officers and men. Mounted Infantry: six officers, 118 non-commissioned officers and men.

Total mounted troops: 41 officers, 696 non-commissioned officers and men.

'On arrival I at once sent the Mounted Infantry to the front, accompanied by Colonel Ardagh as Intelligence Officer. About 10 a.m. it was reported to me that the enemy was in force some six miles distant. Accordingly I ordered the force to advance as soon as the men had had their dinners, and got in movement about 1 p.m. The afternoon was hot, and frequent halts were necessary. About 5 p.m. the Cavalry scouts came in, and I received a report in writing from the officer that the enemy was advancing to attack in force. Accordingly I at once formed up the troops in a defensive position on a favourable piece of ground, having a clear space in front, and as there was now barely an hour of daylight left I directed the Engineers and pioneers of battalions to form a zeriba around the camp by cutting down the prickly mimosa bushes which grew plentifully about. About 6 p.m. the Cavalry with Mounted Infantry were sent back to Baker's zeriba with instructions to bring in the Convoy that had been previously signalled for. About half-past 6 p.m. this Convoy arrived safely, consisting of 245 camels, carrying two days' supply of water for men, 4400 rations, forage for 1200 horses, and reserve ammunition.

'Before this, the enemy had fired a few rifle-shots at us, and had shown in some numbers on a ridge about 1000 to 1200 yards distant. By way of checking this, and to show the power of our guns, I ordered out two of the 9-pounders under Major Holley, R. A., and fired four rounds of shrapnel, two of which burst with great accuracy. Captain Rolfe, R. N., also opened with a Gardner gun, and the enemy disappeared.

'About 11 p.m. Captain Rolfe informed me that he had just returned from an expedition to the front, where he had been to see the effect of our fire. He had found one or two dead bodies, and had come across some of the enemy's sentries fast asleep. Further back, the natives were shouting and dancing around fires.

'About a quarter to 1 p.m. (? a.m.) there was an alarm, and the enemy opened a distant dropping fire, which continued throughout the night, causing but few casualties, but disturbing the men's rest. I had two of the Naval Brigade machine-guns run out, but as the range was (by interval between flash and sound) estimated at 1400 to 1500 yards, and no men showed themselves, it seemed to me better to treat the enemy's fire with silence, in preference to making an inefficient reply.

'Our casualties were one man killed, York and Lancaster; one officer and four men wounded, besides two camel-drivers and some horses struck.

'About 7 a.m. the Cavalry arrived, and at 7.30 Brigadier-General Stewart ordered out the Mounted Infantry to feel the enemy. There

was a native with us who had lately been a prisoner in Osman Digna's camp, and who informed me that the bulk of their force would be in a deep khor or dry water-course, the sides of which would serve as an entrenchment. I therefore directed the advance to be made to the left of this position, where the ground rose a little, and from whence I hoped to be able to sweep the ravine with artillery fire before attacking. The advance was made by the two brigades in direct échelon of brigade squares from the left.

'The 2nd Brigade was in the following formation :—On the left flank, four companies of 1st Royal Highlanders in open column of companies; on front face, three companies of 1st Royal Highlanders, and at an interval of thirty yards, three companies of 1st York and Lancaster: on right flank, three companies of 1st York and Lancaster, the Royal Marines forming the rear face of square. Inside the square were the guns of the Naval Brigade, ready to run out when required. The 9-pounder battery, with transport animals, moved in rear of the right front of the square.

'The 2nd Brigade began to advance from the place of formation about half-past eight a.m., and, owing to some delay in getting the 1st Brigade forward, were somewhat further in advance than I had intended when they first came in contact with the enemy. This occurred about nine a.m., when a large number suddenly appeared from the edge of a ravine in the immediate front of the brigade. These were soon cleared off; the Royal Highlanders distinguishing themselves by the gallant manner in which they cheered and charged up to the edge of the ravine; but at this moment a more formidable attack came from another direction, and a large body of natives, coming in one continuous stream, charged with reckless determination, utterly regardless of all loss, on the right-hand corner of the square formed by the 1st York and Lancaster. The brigade fell back in disorder, and the enemy captured the guns of the Naval Brigade, which, however, were locked by officers and men, who stood by them to the last. When first coming into action, the 9-pounder battery of four guns, under Major Holley, R.A., had been ordered outside the square on the right flank, and when the disordered retirement took place in the 2nd Brigade, this battery was for a time unprotected by infantry, and exposed to the assault of the enemy, now coming on in crowds. Yet officers and men stood firmly to their guns, raking the advancing enemy with case, which told with deadly effect. The 1st Brigade was attacked about the same time, but stood firm, and the cavalry moved up to protect the flank of the 2nd Brigade, which was soon rallied, and advanced to retake the guns of the Naval Brigade. The zeriba was also threatened, but the little garrison stood to its arms, and drove the enemy back. After this there was no more serious fighting, and the enemy retreated sullenly, making an occasional stand, towards the camp and village of Tamaai, which was occupied by the 1st Brigade about 11.40 a.m., when I despatched a telegram to Admiral Hewett announcing the victory.

'The 2nd Brigade held the heights above the springs, where the cavalry watered. Ambulances and mule cacolets were sent for to bring away the dead and wounded, all being brought into the zeriba occupied the previous night, where tents and all necessary medical requirements had already been brought up. The cavalry returned again to Baker's zeriba.

'The night was undisturbed by any fire from the enemy, but voices were heard shouting and wailing from the battlefield.

'On the morning of the 14th I sent the cavalry on at once to the watering-place, where pickets of Mounted Infantry were posted on the heights. The enemy offered no opposition beyond sending a few dropping shots, which were replied to by selected marksmen.

'The whole force was moved out except the Naval Brigade, and the 1st Infantry Brigade crowned the heights above Osman's camp and village, whilst a fatigue party were employed collecting the ammunition preparatory to firing the huts. An escaped Egyptian soldier, one of the garrison of Tokar, informed me of a gun being there, but only the carriage could be found, which was destroyed, together with large quantities of ammunition.

'After the men's dinners the retirement commenced, the cavalry going straight to Souakim, leaving only a squadron to cover the infantry, who marched to Baker's zeriba. The advanced zeriba had been cleared. 200 sailors of the fleet, who had been promptly sent by Admiral Hewett, and two companies of the 1st Royal Highlanders, together with the ambulance and mule cacolets being employed to carry the wounded.

'On the 15th the whole force was again concentrated at Souakim. In reviewing the operations of the force since landing at Souakim, I beg to record my opinion that the troops of all arms have behaved admirably.

'There has been no crime and no grumbling, even all through the severe toil of the disembarkation, and of the march in the waterless desert. The absence of scares or panic among the troops during the nights, and especially their silence during the trying ordeal of a dropping fire on the night preceding the battle, all showed a sense of discipline and confidence worthy of the best troops.

There was but a temporary check in one portion of the force during the action of Tamaai, and for that many reasons can be given. At the moment of receiving the attack, the front face of the square of the 2nd Brigade was slightly disordered, owing to the gallant rush of the Royal Highlanders in charging the enemy at the top of the ravine. For this disorder I am to some extent personally responsible, as the charge took place under my eyes and with my approval. My own observations of the attack were made from the right front angle, formed by the two half-battalions of the 1st York and Lancaster, where I posted myself as soon as I saw the enemy's attack, and it was here the main rush

came. It is the habit of these Arabs to attack the angles of squares, as they know that least fire can be brought to bear on them from these points. As the 9-pounder battery was on the right, the sailors' guns were on the left, but I at once sent for them to meet this attack from the right. The Arabs, however, gave no time for further arrangements, but, throwing themselves with desperate determination upon the angle of the square, broke it, carrying all before them. There were many attempted rallies among the York and Lancaster, and at one time I was almost surrounded by the enemy, one of whom got over my horse's quarter. In rear of the square were the Royal Marines, than whom there can be no finer troops, and on whom I had calculated as a reserve in the last emergency. Such, however, was the sudden nature of the disorder, and the impetuosity of the rush, that the Royal Marines were for a few minutes swept back, and mixed up in the general confusion. Yet, I submit, there was no panic among the men; they had been surprised, attacked suddenly, and driven back by a fanatical and determined enemy, who came on utterly regardless of loss, and who were, as I have since learned, led by their bravest chiefs. As soon as the men had had time to think, they rallied and re-formed. This check affected only the 2nd Brigade. The remainder of the force, the cavalry, the Royal Artillery, and 1st Brigade, were firm and perfectly in hand, repulsing all attacks, and co-operating to assist the 2nd Brigade in driving back the enemy, who suffered tremendously for his temporary success, and never charged home again that day.

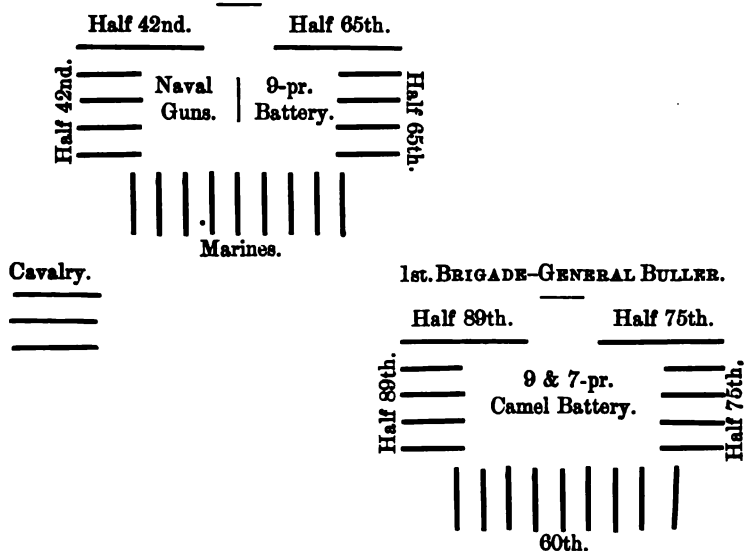
Our loss was very grievous, many brave men of the Royal Highlanders and York and Lancaster devoting themselves to certain death in noble efforts to maintain the honour of their regiments.

The Naval Brigade, too, fought desperately for their guns, three officers and seven men being killed beside them; but they did not abandon them till they were locked, so that the enemy could not turn them against us. Many acts of the highest personal courage have come to my notice, and I propose bringing forward at a later period the names of officers and men who distinguished themselves on this occasion, and during the operations subsequent to the landing at Souakim.'

The foregoing despatch scarcely does justice to the events of the day. To deal with the matter more in detail:—On leaving the scene of the bivouac, the two brigades were separated by a distance of about 1000 yards. As the 2nd Brigade, led by Davis, moved off to the left, it was joined by Graham and staff.

The following diagram explains the formation :—

2nd BRIGADE—GENERAL DAVIS.



The 1st Brigade, under Buller, marched on the right rear side of the other, at a distance varying from 600 to 900 yards in an oblique line. In military language the two brigades moved in *échelon*, the 2nd Brigade leading, the object being to expose the enemy, in the event of his charging one brigade, to a raking or flank fire from the other. The rear battalions and the half-battalions on either flank of either brigade marched at wheeling distances, so that on the word to form outwards being given, two complete squares could be formed. The two brigades were thus placed so as to form two independent oblongs, the front face or line of each brigade being about 200 yards in length, the sides about 100 yards. The main body of the cavalry were *écheloned* on the left rear of the 2nd Brigade.

It will be seen that although the force at Tamaai

was about the same as that at El-Teb, a different formation was adopted. The unwieldiness of a single great square had been shown by experience. It had the further disadvantage that in the event of an attack on one side, the fire of at least two of the other sides could not be utilised. There was, moreover, the old adage against 'putting all one's eggs in one basket.' The comparatively difficult ground which had to be got over at Tamaai was probably another reason for the change.

The route lay in a S.S.E. direction across a sloping plateau intersected by dry water-courses, towards a deep 'nullah' or ravine full of boulders and huge detached rocks. The morning was bright and clear, but there was no wind, as at El-Teb, to carry off the smoke. This, as will be seen, became important. As the brigades advanced, the black forms of the Soudanese could be seen ranged along the hills on the front and right of the British force.

Two squadrons of cavalry, together with some Abyssinians, were sent forward to skirmish and endeavour to clear the bushes through which the infantry had to advance. The skirmishers had not gone far before they became hotly engaged. Captain Humphreys, in command, sent back word that a broad ravine was occupied in force. Although this was only a few hundred yards in front, it was so hidden by bushes as to be invisible to the infantry.

About twenty minutes after starting, the 2nd Brigade was halted to re-form itself from the somewhat loose order into which it had fallen in its advance over the rough ground. At half-past eight it was moving slowly towards the ravine which extended itself irregularly all along the front, and was from 900 to 1000 yards off. The 1st Brigade, 700 yards distant to the right and

rear, was timing its movements and taking its ground step by step with the 2nd Brigade.

Some 5000 or 6000 Soudanese were now visible, the greater part being on the south or more distant side of the ravine, here about fifty to 100 yards wide. Some hundreds of the enemy were also among the bushes to the right as well as in the immediate front. They opened fire on the 2nd Brigade, pouring in a hailstorm of bullets, the greater part of which flew harmlessly overhead. The skirmishers were withdrawn, and as soon as they were out of the line of fire, the brigade replied, the men firing independently as they advanced. When the square got within 200 yards of the ravine, a series of broken and irregular rushes was made by the Soudanese on the front and right; but the fire of the Martinis prevented any of the enemy getting at this time within twenty yards of the British line. The front and flank became soon comparatively clear of foes.

At this moment Graham* gave the order 'Forty-second, Charge!' and the Black Watch forming the left half-face of the square, remembering the General's speech of two days before, cheered and broke away at the double. The 65th half battalion, on the right face of the square, heard no order given to them, but, seeing the Highlanders dash ahead, they too rushed on.

The front rank of the square charged up to within thirty yards from the edge of the ravine, then slackened speed somewhat, and though still advancing recommenced firing. The order was given to 'cease firing,' but the men, seeing armed natives spring up in every direction right and left, were not to be controlled in this respect. There was much vain endeavour on the

* General Graham, who had taken the command of the Brigade out of the hands of General Davis, gave the order personally.

part of the officers to stop their men blazing away at objects many of them less than 100 yards distant away.

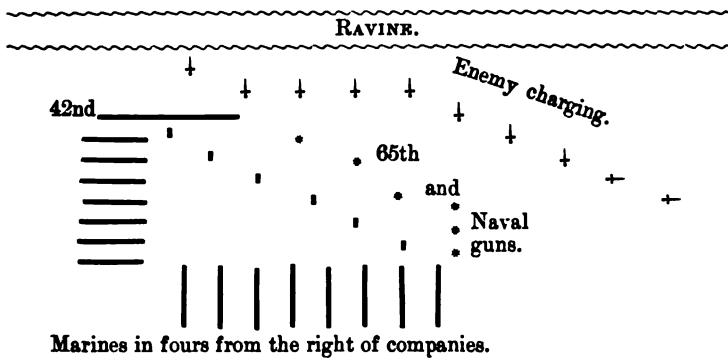
The enemy were swarming on the ridges on the opposite side of the ravine, and the Gatling and Gardner guns, which had been run out a few yards in front of the right corner of the square, were turned upon them. Many of them were observed running down the slopes, and disappearing among the rocks in the little valley intervening.

In the absence of any wind, the smoke from the Gatlings and Martinis hung around the column in thick folds, totally obscuring the view. Under cover of the smoke, hundreds of Soudanese crept unperceived up the side of the ravine, and threw themselves upon the right front and right flank of the square. Crawling on their hands and knees beneath the bayonets and under the muzzles of the Gardners and Gatlings, they got inside stabbing and slashing and doing fearful execution. This was the rush referred to in Graham's despatch as happening about nine a.m.

The 65th, unable to resist the onslaught, were thrown back in confusion upon the Marines in the rear. Numbers of the 65th were knocked off their legs in the rush. Their Colonel (Byam) and four of his officers were thrown down. Soldiers and savages alike went trampling over them. As the Colonel lay, he was assailed by four spearmen, but with his revolver he shot one at each touch of the trigger. The Colonel rose up, and whilst the main body of his regiment was broken into pieces, rallied some thirty of his men around him, and standing back to back they repelled with bayonet-thrusts the assaults of the Soudanese who encircled them. Fifteen of the men of the 65th fell where they stood.

As the 65th on the right face and corner were borne back from the edge of the ravine, the right wing of the 42nd became exposed, and the enemy rushing in at the gap, were among the Highlanders on their flank and rear cutting and spearing in every direction. The 42nd then recoiled several paces, the movement, according to one correspondent, 'resembling the slow swing of a door on its hinges.'

The condition of the column was something like this :—



An officer appropriately compared the appearance of his part of the yielding line to the scramble in a game of football. The men were so huddled together that many of them were unable either to fire their rifles or use their bayonets.

Captain Scott Stevenson, of the 42nd, was suddenly seized by the legs by some Soudanese, who were crawling on the ground. One of them dragged at the frogs of his kilt, and then at his 'sporrán.' Captain Stevenson, who is one of the best boxers in the army, literally kicked himself clear, and his claymore being too long a weapon to use at such close quarters, he laid about him with its hilt and with his fist.

The Marines in rear of the Brigade were wheeled

up to support the 65th, and close the gaps left in the formation, but it was too late, and they too were thrown into confusion, and borne away on the line of retreat. Graham and his staff tried their best to check the retreat and rally the men. As the Marines were being swept away, Major Colwell shouted in stentorian tones, 'Men of the Portsmouth Division, Rally,' which they did, 150 of them closing together in a compact body, forming a little square. The Highlanders also formed one or two such groups, and materially assisted in bringing about the general rally which soon followed. In spite of every effort, however, the whole force fell back about 800 yards, in a direction to the eastward of that taken in the advance.

The Naval Brigade, who had been sent to the front with their machine-guns during the rush, lost three of their officers, Lieutenants Montessor, Almack, and Houston Stewart, and many of their men. The machine-guns had to be abandoned, partly owing to the hurried retreat, and partly because of the nature of the ground. Before retiring, the Naval Brigade found time to lock the guns so as to prevent the enemy who immediately captured them, from making any use of the weapons in the short interval which elapsed before they were re-taken.

It is due to the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade, to say that although driven back, there was no such thing as a 'stampede.' They retreated backwards face to the foe, loading and firing all the time they were engaged in meeting the attack with thrusts of the bayonet.

Instances of individual heroism were not wanting at this trying moment. One Highlander, seeing three or four mounted sheikhs, who were hounding on their men, rushed out at the leader of them, and bayoneted him on his horse. Whilst the Black Watch were retiring,

hard pressed, a private rushed at one of the enemy who was slashing right and left, and ran him through with his bayonet, doing it so violently that he had to drag the wounded man with him for some distance before the soldier could extract the weapon. Every soldier who stumbled or fell during the retreat was at once done for, the enemy darting forward in squads, and thrusting their spears into them as long as a sign of life remained.

The nature of the struggle at the front may be gathered from the fact that of twenty men who formed a section of a company of the Black Watch when charging up to the ravine, only three escaped alive, and they were badly wounded.

As has been related above, the formation of isolated groups among the retreating soldiers assisted to bring about the rally which took place in about twenty minutes.

But a more powerful aid, and one without which Davis's square might have shared the fate of Baker's force at El-Teb, was at hand. The 1st Brigade, under Buller, had been attacked at the same time as the 2nd Brigade, but from its position at some 400 to 500 yards distance from the ravine, it had the advantage of a wider fire radius. The men were formed in square, the Gordon Highlanders on the right, and the 89th on the left, being the leading regiments, with the 60th in the rear, and the 9 and 7-pounder guns under Major Gough, in the centre.

Whilst the narrowness of the space between the slope and the 2nd Brigade enabled the enemy to 'rush' the square before the infantry had time to fire more than a round or two, the breadth of the space between the slope and Buller's troops, rendered it impossible for the enemy to reach the square in face of a well-directed fire.

Scarcely one of the Soudanese who ran nearer than eighty yards to Buller's square lived to tell the tale. There was no hurry, no flurry in the handling of this Brigade. The men formed up, shoulder to shoulder, in leisurely order when they saw the enemy coming on. Their deliberate volleys sounded like the harsh grating sound of the sea on a shingly beach, and when the smoke drifted slowly away the plain reappeared black with the bodies of the dead and dying.

Not content with attacking Buller's square in the front and on the flanks, the enemy even passed round to the rear, so that, at one time, all four sides were engaged. So well, however, was the Brigade handled, and so steady were the men, that this made no difference. Buller was able, not only to hold his own ground, but also to assist the 2nd Brigade. As this fell back, it got to the left of Buller's square, and the General, seeing that something was wrong, moved up a short distance, and began pouring in a heavy cross fire upon the Soudanese who were assailing the other Brigade. At the same time Stewart, moving his cavalry round to the left flank of Buller's square, dismounted his men and fired a volley into the enemy's right flank. The Soudanese were thus between two fires.

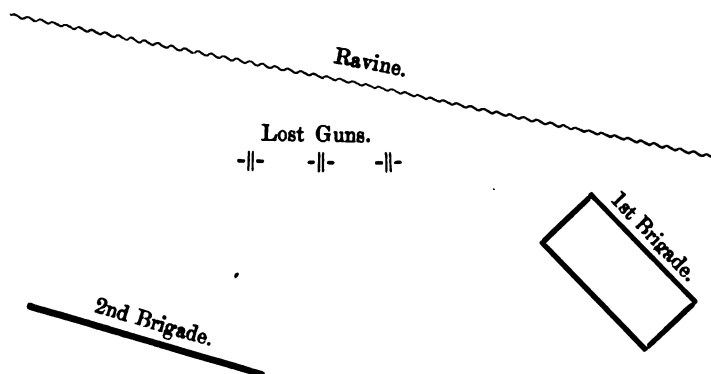
Covered by the fire of the 1st Brigade and the cavalry, Davis's square rallied at once. The retreating troops were halted and re-formed, this time in line with the Marines on the right, the 65th in the centre, and the 42nd, with 160 of the Naval Brigade in their rear, on the left.

After a quarter of an hour's halt, and a fresh supply of ammunition having been served out to each man, the 2nd Brigade went once more to the attack.

The soldiers were strictly forbidden to fire until the

enemy should come well within range, and on this occasion they obeyed orders more faithfully, marching slowly and clearing the ground of the enemy as they advanced. Thanks to the position taken by the 1st Brigade, which had now moved up 200 yards closer to the ravine and halted, Buller was able to pour a raking fire into the enemy, and so prevent any attempt to again 'rush' Davis's flank.

The position was thus :—



In ten minutes the lost ground had been regained and the guns recaptured. They were immediately hauled into position and a few rounds fired at the enemy, who began to move off to the opposite slopes of the ravine, within twenty paces of which Davis's force halted at 11 a.m.

It was now the turn of the 1st Brigade, which, still in square formation, was sent off to take a second intervening ridge some 800 yards off. Forward down and across the ravine went the brigade. With a cheer the men took the first ridge, firing as they went along occasional shots at the enemy's main body, who could be seen gathered on the second ridge beyond. The

Soudanese, disheartened, kept up a feeble fire, retreating as the brigade advanced. The defence of the second ridge was insignificant, and it was carried without difficulty.

From the top Tamaai could be seen in the valley 180 feet below, with the tents and huts of Osman Digna's camp. By 11.40 a.m., as stated in Graham's despatch, these were in the possession of the British forces.

Osman Digna was not present at the battle, preferring to watch the action from the top of a neighbouring hill. His cousin, Mohammed Mousa, commanded the rebels, riding a white horse, and was shot at the commencement of the engagement.

Squads of men were now told off to search for the wounded, a task of some danger on account of the number of partially disabled Soudanese lying in the bush. Here, as at El-Teb, wounded Arabs refused to accept quarter, but waited an opportunity to spring out and attack any of the soldiers who came sufficiently close. An eye-witness wrote as follows :—

'One wounded savage lay half reclining on a sloping bank near the spot where the Gatling-gun had been rolled into the ravine. He was badly wounded in the leg, a bullet having shattered his knee. Grasping his heavy broad-bladed spear he looked defiance and mischief at the soldiers as they approached. A blue-jacket was the first to venture near him, and although Jack had his rifle and cutlass attached, he liked not the far-reaching, quick-striking spear. The troops were forbidden to fire, and there was nothing for it but to tackle the man with steel. The deft handling of the spear, wounded as the Arab was, made Jack cautious. I looked and watched. A soldier now stole up on the opposite side of the Hadendowa, but even then the savage, like a wounded stag at bay, was not to be trifled with. A mean subterfuge, cunning stratagem, or what you will you may call it, prevailed. A stone thrown at the Arab's head stunned him for a moment, and before he recovered the blue-jacket had plunged his cutlass into him, bending the weapon into such a hoop shape that he could just barely withdraw it.'

The British losses were as follows :—Killed : Lieut. Montresor, *Euryalus* ; Lieut. Almack, *Briton* ; Lieut.

Houstoun Stewart, *Dryad*; Capt. H. G. W. Ford, York and Lancaster; Major Aitken, Royal Highlanders; and 86 non-commissioned officers and privates, Wounded: Captain Brophy, Lieut.-Colonel Green, Lieut. D. A. McLeod, Royal Highlanders; Major McDonald, 2nd Highland Light Infantry (attached to Royal Highlanders); Major R. Dalgetty, York and Lancaster; Surgeon H. C. R. Cross, Royal Navy; Surgeon Prendergast, A.M.D.; Mr. St. Leger Herbert, newspaper correspondent; and 103 non-commissioned officers and privates.

Total killed: five officers and 86 men. Wounded: seven officers and 103 men. Missing: nineteen men.

Of the above, three officers and eleven men were killed at the taking of the naval guns, and the loss of the 2nd Brigade at the time of the square being broken was 70 in killed alone.

The number of the enemy was originally reported by Graham as being from 10,000 to 12,000, and the loss as over 2000 in killed alone. According to one account over 1500 lay dead in an area of 200 yards; 600 of these were counted on the spot where the square was broken. Another account puts the total number of the enemy's forces engaged at 9000, and the loss in killed and wounded at something between 1000 and 4000. Unfortunately, exactness in such matters is impossible.

Of the nature of the surprise intended for Graham at the ravine, he had, as he admits in his despatch, full and ample warning beforehand. The spy, who gave the information* advised making a *détour* to the left of the position, and then moving up the ravine in which Osman Digna's followers lay concealed.

* He was paid 100*l.* for it by Admiral Hewett.

Graham would thus take them in flank, be able to shell them, and avoid the sudden rush from cover which was intended, and which so nearly proved disastrous. But the General seems to have paid little attention to the warning. He did, it is true, make a slight *détour* on approaching the ravine ; but he marched his men up to its very brink. If, as appears from his despatch, he ever had the intention of sweeping the ravine with artillery fire before attacking, he either forgot or neglected to carry it out, and the result was what has been seen.

After the first halt to re-form his Brigade, the subsequent advance to the edge of the ravine strikes one as having been both unnecessary and injudicious.

The enemy had been reported by Captain Humphreys as being in the ravine and in force. They were, in fact, many of them massed on the very edge and keen for the attack. It is certain that they did attack Buller's Brigade, which was behind, and it is only fair to infer that had Davis's column remained halted, at least for a time, the enemy would have taken the initiative, as they did in regard to Buller's square. The advance cannot therefore be defended as necessary for the purpose of drawing the enemy.

It was injudicious, inasmuch as, by approaching his square to within a short distance of the enemy's cover, Graham gave them but a few yards to traverse exposed to the fire of the Martinis, before the Soudanese were upon him. Buller's force, on the contrary, being halted nearly 500 yards from the ravine, got a clear range and was able to shoot down every one of its assailants before he came to anything like close quarters.

As to the order given to the front rank of the square to charge, it is unnecessary to say anything in its condemnation. The charge was made at nothing. The front rank doubled, whilst the flank and rear only followed at quick time. It was, as a critic remarked,

taking the lid off the box. It is only fair to suppose that the order was given in the excitement of the fight and without consideration. Graham did, it is believed, afterwards admit that he had no recollection of having given the order at all, and that this was his impression is evident from the tone of his despatch. A braver soldier than General Graham, or one possessing a more gallant and confident bearing in action, does not exist; but the very inability to see danger sometimes becomes, in a General especially, a danger in itself.

Of the conduct of the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade it is impossible to speak too highly. It was in consequence of a sheer military blunder that the front of the square got separated from the rest, and that the men were driven back by the surging mass of Soudanese; but it was proof of the highest discipline and coolness that under these circumstances the men, compelled to retire, kept their faces steadily toward the enemy, and were able, without panic or confusion, to be re-formed. According to Sir Archibald Alison, 'When soldiers are once broken in a fight usually a panic seizes them, they flee and cannot be rallied. The very reverse happened at Tamaai. They went back, struggling, borne down, overpowered, crushed. But there was no panic flight. No man retired one foot further than the spears of the enemy actually drove him.'

It is important to notice this fact, inasmuch as the yielding of the square was made use of by Continental journals as evidence of the 'decadence of the British Army.' Rightly considered, what took place proves exactly the reverse.

The feeling of the troops, or at all events of the 2nd Brigade, after the battle, was that they had been victorious in spite of the mismanagement of their superiors.

The men of the Black Watch were especially sore

at what had occurred. Their idea was that they had been needlessly exposed. They had a grievance ever since the beginning of the campaign. At El-Teb they had been expected to charge rifle-pits in which hundreds of the enemy were concealed. As this movement would have caused great loss, the advance was made deliberately. For this the regiment had, as has already been mentioned, been severely taken to task. As if to enable them to retrieve the supposed loss of reputation, the Black Watch were placed in the position of honour and danger at Tamaai; and when the order to double against the enemy, thus, as it turned out, breaking the square, was given, they obeyed promptly, though, as they said, 'We knew the order was foolish, but we were put on our mettle.' The Black Watch found themselves charging at nothing, while the Arabs were pouring in between the gap left between the former and the 65th, who failed to keep pace with the 42nd. It was of no use they argued, to form a square if it was to rush at the enemy in fragments. The officers also felt extremely sore on the subject. It was not certain that this frame of mind was much modified by the tone of an address published by Graham in the Orders of the day, in which he said :—

'There was only one critical moment, when discipline was forgotten, but remember, you men of the 2nd Brigade, when you rallied and stood shoulder to shoulder, all danger was over and the enemy no longer faced you. Remember, also, those brave comrades who stood to the last, who cared more for your honour than for their own safety, and who died nobly on the spot where the dead bodies of 600 enemies showed how dearly they purchased that temporary success. The thanks of the Army are due to the 1st Brigade for the steadiness with which they received and repulsed the enemy's attack.'

CHAPTER XVI.

GRAHAM'S SUBSEQUENT OPERATIONS.

Destruction of Osman Digna's Camp at Tamaai—Concentration of the Army at Souakim—Reward for Osman Digna's Head—Flogging of Egyptian Camel-Drivers and Soldiers—Advance to the Wells of Handouk—Advance of General Graham—Skirmish with the Enemy—Occupation of Tamanieb—Return of the forces to Souakim and their dispersal—Results of the Campaign—Ill Effects of Graham's Withdrawal—The Question of assisting Gordon considered.

BEFORE returning to Souakim on the 15th March, as reported by General Graham, parties of the Engineers were told off to complete the destruction of Osman Digna's camp at Tamaai. This extended over a level plain two miles in length, surrounded by naked rocks. Amongst the spoils captured were grain-bags full of money, Korans, talismans, &c., including the standard of Osman and the banner of Tewfik, the defender of Sinkat. The camp, as well as the huts and stores, were soon in a blaze in scores of different places, the flames shooting up to a great height, and volumes of smoke obscuring the view between the camp and the distant hills. One feature of the scene was the explosion of the magazines containing about 600,000 rifle cartridges captured at Baker's defeat at El-Teb, besides a large quantity of Krupp and machine-gun ammunition. When the magazine was ignited a fusillade began, which lasted without intermission for half-an-hour. The remains of the rebel army watched the conflagration from the adjoining hills, but beyond firing a few dropping shots, one of which wounded a soldier of the 60th, made no opposition.

The British forces being once more concentrated at Souakim, Admiral Hewett issued a proclamation offering 5000 dollars for the head of Osman Digna. The following is a translation :—‘I, the English Governor and General, civil and military, of Souakim, make known that whoever will bring in the rebel Osman, the murderer, who has by his lies caused the blood of the tribes to be spilt at El-Teb and Tamanieb, alive or dead, shall receive 5000 dollars reward.’

Whether this step was in accordance with the rules of civilised warfare or not may well be doubted. At all events, it created a strong feeling of indignation in England, and in three days the Admiral, acting under instructions from home, withdrew the objectionable document.

On the 17th March sixteen of the Egyptian camel-drivers of the carrier corps who had fled from the zeriba during the action at Tamaai were flogged by the Provost Marshal at Souakim. These men were no worse in this respect than the rest of the Egyptians of the same corps, who all fled to the rear when the 2nd Brigade began retiring, except that these sixteen got into the town and spread alarming stories of a disaster to the troops. Thirty-eight Egyptian soldiers, who had mutinied and refused to work, also received the same punishment.

On the 18th the 19th Hussars, the Mounted Infantry, and the Gordon Highlanders, made a march to the wells of Handouk, a few miles from Souakim. They found the huts all deserted, and no signs of the enemy. A zeriba was formed at the base of a detached hill held by a company of the Highlanders. News was brought to the camp that Osman Digna's force was increasing, and that he had announced his intention of renewing the fighting in ten days. He was reported to have 2000 men with him.

On the 19th General Stewart, with two squadrons of Hussars, went to Otao, eight miles further west, in search of the enemy, but in vain. A squadron was also sent to Tamanieb, where Osman was reported to be, but found no traces of him.

On the 21st two batteries of artillery and also the 10th Hussars were moved out to Handouk.

On the 23rd the Gordon Highlanders were sent to a point near the entrance of the Tamanieb valley to form a new zeriba in conjunction with a company of the 89th, which marched from Souakim to join them, with water and stores.

On the 25th General marched with two brigades to a zeriba eleven miles from Souakim.

As the whole military force was thus withdrawn from Souakim, 300 marines and blue-jackets were landed from the *Carysfort* and *Euryalus* to garrison the lines and forts. A new zeriba was formed four miles further inland in a north-westerly direction.

The march out was a most exhausting one on account of the heat, and between 300 and 400 men fell out of the ranks. There were numerous cases of sunstroke. According to one account, the number of men who fell out was equal to one-fourth of the whole force, the rear of which, it is said, resembled a routed army. The 65th regiment, which had been thirteen years in India, suffered more especially. Many of the sick found room in the ambulances, and others trudged along as best they could on foot.

The men were now becoming disgusted with the campaign, and there was a good deal of grumbling and dissatisfaction.

The whole force bivouacked when nine miles from Souakim. The enclosure being too small to hold the entire force, the 75th regiment, with the ammunition,

stores, and water, was alone placed inside it. The rest of the force bivouacked on the rear face of the zeriba. The infantry were formed as at Tamaai, in two brigades, the first and second under Generals Buller and Davis respectively, and the men lay down under arms. A double line of sentries, supported by strong pickets, was thrown forward, to guard against a surprise. During the night, which passed undisturbed, Major Chermiside, R.E., joined the camp with a party of natives recruited at Souakim. They included seven sheikhs and 161 men, armed with swords and spears. Sheikh Morgani accompanied them as leader. To distinguish these allies from the enemy, each man wore a piece of red calico round his head or neck.

The night's rest restored the men who had fallen out during the march, and all but four returned to duty on the morning of the 26th.

Stewart's brigade of cavalry, with the Arab auxiliaries, left the camp shortly after nine a.m. for Tamanieb. Graham's orders were that operations should be confined to reconnoitring, the troops to fall back on learning the enemy's position.

The cavalry went forward in échelon of troops from the right of Brigade, the 10th Hussars leading. The Mounted Infantry marched in rear of the Hussar regiments. For the first five miles the route lay across a plain through patches of mimosa. After this, the hills were reached. Small parties of the enemy were seen mounted on dromedaries, watching the force.

On a hill, 600 feet high, Stewart established a heliograph station for signalling to the zeriba in the rear. Six of the native auxiliaries were sent a-head with instructions to tell the Arabs that the troops had no quarrel with them, and, unless fired on, would not injure any one; whilst, as to Osman Digna, if he would

surrender, his life would be spared. The natives, though mounted, never succeeded in getting near enough to the enemy to deliver their pacific message.

After another five miles' march, a second signal-station was established among the hills. From this point the enemy's position could be seen two miles distant. Behind them were the Wells of Tamanieb. The number of the enemy appeared to be about 3000. Major Chermside and two of the natives went within 800 yards of the position in order to try to parley, but they were received with a volley from the Remingtons. It was now half-past one, and the Mounted Infantry advanced to within 700 yards, keeping up a fire meanwhile. This skirmishing was continued till three o'clock, when the object of the reconnaissance having been attained, General Stewart withdrew to the first signal station. Here he was met by General Buller, who had advanced with the 75th and 89th regiments, having left the camp at ten.

In the afternoon, the remainder of the force, with the exception of the 65th regiment and the sick, also advanced and joined Buller at the first signal station, where a new zeriba was formed. A quiet night was passed at the advanced zeriba.

Shortly after five o'clock the following day the entire force marched out. The first Brigade, composed of the 75th, the 89th, and the 60th, was leading; the second, comprising the 42nd, the Marines, and details of the 75th, followed. Four guns, as also two guns of the Camel Battery, were also brought up. The total of Graham's force was 3000 men, the reduction being due to the absence of the Naval Brigade and the invalids left behind.

The Mounted Infantry scouted along the ridges to the right and left flanks, but there was for some time no sign of the enemy.

It was cool at first, owing to the early hour at which the march commenced, and there were no sick. The men were in the best of spirits, not only at the prospect of meeting the enemy, but because they believed that the impending engagement would end the campaign. The troops went forward very slowly on account of the rocky nature of the ground. About fifty men fell out owing to the heat. As the enemy's position was approached, the Mounted Infantry and a squadron of Hussars were sent forward to occupy the ground held during the skirmish of the previous day. As they advanced the enemy opened a fire to which the troopers replied.

At nine Graham brought up the reserve of the Mounted Infantry, leaving the two Infantry Brigades in the rear. Shortly after this, the enemy's fire slackened.

Half-an-hour afterwards the 1st Brigade had advanced far enough for the 9-pounders to open fire on the enemy of whom only small bodies could be seen.

At ten the cavalry skirmishers were within 100 yards of the Tamanieb Khor, and the Soudanese were seen retreating to the right and left. Close at hand were the wells, and the troops were halted for a quarter of an hour to water the horses which were suffering greatly from thirst. The soldiers, too, drank copiously after their march. The cavalry then formed up and moved to the right and left along the wells to the village. There was no resistance, and Graham ordered the burning of the village. This was immediately carried out, and the huts, some 300 in number, were soon in a blaze.

After this achievement, the sole result of the expedition, the troops started on the return march to Souakim.

Graham's report of the engagement is contained in two telegrams of which the following are copies :—

' Valley of Tamanieb, 26th March, 10 A.M.

' Have occupied enemy's position and springs without serious opposition; enemy firing a few shots and retiring on approach of infantry. No casualties. Ground very rocky; unfit for cavalry, very difficult for artillery. Cavalry and Mounted Infantry had no water since yesterday morning, and have worked splendidly. I, after watering, shall reconnoitre up valley, and retire on zeriba occupied last night. Troops in excellent condition. As yet see no signs of friendly tribes, and consider this position unfit for occupation.'

' Tamanieb, March 27th, 1884, 1.30 P.M.

' Force returning to zeriba occupied last night, after burning Osman Digna's villages, having met with no opposition worth mentioning. Two horses killed, Mounted Infantry.'

There were no casualties on the side of the British, nor do any of the accounts refer to any loss on the part of the enemy, who, according to one report, did not number over 100.

The whole of the British force reached Souakim on the 28th, and with the exception of a battalion left to garrison that place was at once broken up, the troops from Egypt returning to Cairo, and the remainder proceeding to England.

No trustworthy information was obtained as to the position or force of Osman Digna, though the village of Tamanieb showed signs of a recent occupation by his army. Under these circumstances, to attempt to pursue Osman further in the interior was considered to be impracticable. The troops, too, were again suffering from the heat, and it was deemed best to close the campaign for the season.

The rapidity of Graham's campaign was one of its most striking features. The orders for the expedition were received in Cairo on the 12th February. By the 1st of March a force of over 4000 men had been as-

sembled at Trinkitat, had fought the battle of El-Teb, and had brought away the fugitives from Tokar.

Starting from Souakim on the 11th March, the expedition had by the 28th fought the battle of Tamaai, occupied the enemy's position at Tamanieb, and terminated the campaign.

Besides serving to develop the admirable qualities of the British soldier under trying conditions, the campaign cannot be said to have achieved much, it having only shattered, and not annihilated, Osman Digna.

The ill effects of the withdrawal of Graham's force from the Eastern Soudan upon the rebellious tribes cannot well be exaggerated. Notwithstanding their repeated defeats they easily persuaded themselves that they had driven the English out of the country, and the policy of 'Rescue and Retire' pursued by the British Government was the means of laying up a store of trouble for Souakim and the neighbourhood.

Although there may have been no further opportunity of fighting Osman Digna at this period, the question naturally arises, whether at all events part of Graham's force might not have been employed in assisting Gordon in withdrawing the Egyptian garrisons.

One pretext for the slaughter of the Soudanese at El-Teb and Tamaai by Graham, was the necessity for opening the road to Berber. On March 25th Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice said :—' One thing was perfectly certain, that it was of the very greatest importance, with a view to keeping open communications with Khartoum, that the road between Souakim and Berber should itself be open.' As the road between Souakim and Berber was the short cut out of the Soudan the importance of keeping it open could hardly have been ignored by a Government engaged in the task of extricating from the Soudan an army of 29,000 men with

all the civil employés and their wives and families. Gordon could hold Khartoum, but by no possible miracle could he keep open the road hundreds of miles in his rear by which he had to send the troops and refugees down to Egypt. Hence, he suggested to the Government that if they wished to intervene, they should open up the Souakim-Berber route by Indian Moslem troops.

After the victory at Tamaai Graham could have sent two squadrons of cavalry through to Berber with ease. He was most anxious to do so. Two squadrons sent through would, in the opinion of all the authorities in the Soudan, have sufficed to open the road and to have saved Berber, which was the key of the Soudan, and without the retention of which the evacuation of Khartoum became absolutely impossible. General Stephenson and Sir Evelyn Wood both agreed that it was possible, although Stephenson disliked it, owing to the scarcity of water on the road.

On February 29th Gordon had telegraphed :—

‘There is not much chance of improving, and every chance of it getting worse; for we have nothing to rely on to make it better. You must, therefore, decide whether you will or will not make an attempt to save the two-thirds of the population who are well affected before these two-thirds retreat. Should you wish to intervene, send 200 British troops to Wady Halfa, and Adjutants to inspect Dongola, and then open up Souakim-Berber road by Indian Moslem troops. This will cause an immediate collapse of the revolt. Whether you think it worth while to do this or not, you are, of course, the best judge. I can only tell you the *modus operandi* of an expeditious intervention. If you decide against this, you may probably have to decide between Zubehr and the Mahdi—Zubehr with 100,000*l*.’

On March the 2nd he telegraphed :—

‘I have no option about staying at Khartoum; it has passed out of my hands, and as to sending a larger force than 200, I do not think it necessary to Wady Halfa. It is not the number, but the prestige which I need. I am sure the revolt will collapse if I can say that I have British troops at my back.’

On the 5th Sir Evelyn Baring wrote to Lord Granville :—

‘General Gordon has on several occasions pressed for 200 British troops to be sent to Wady Halfa. I agree with the military authorities in thinking that it would not be desirable to comply with this request.’

On the 8th Gordon asked, why not utilise Wood and his forces to move on Dongola, and thence to Berber ; ‘the route is safe and camels plentiful.’

A later telegram, sent on the 9th, which did not arrive till the 16th announced that,—

‘Through the weakness of the Government, many had joined the rebels. and that we shall before long be blocked.’

On the 11th he reiterated his appeal for troops to be sent to Berber :

‘In the event of sending an expedition to Berber the greatest importance is speed. A small advanced guard at Berber would keep the riparian tribes between this and Berber quiet, and would be an assurance to the populations of the towns.’

On March the 11th Lord Granville replied to Gordon’s urgent entreaties that ‘Her Majesty’s Government are not prepared to send troops to Berber.’

Sir Evelyn Baring, who had opposed the despatch of troops to Wady Halfa and to Berber, woke up on March the 16th to a sense of the necessity for action. On that day he telegraphed home :—

‘It has now become of the utmost importance not only to open the road between Souakim and Berber, but to come to terms with the tribes between Berber and Khartoum.’

But Lord Granville still felt unable to authorise an advance of British troops.

On March 24th Sir E. Baring telegraphed :—

‘Under present circumstances, I think that an effort should be made to help General Gordon from Souakim, if it is at all a possible military operation. General Stephenson and Sir Evelyn Wood, whilst admitting the very great risk to the health of the troops, besides the extraordinary military risks, are of opinion that the undertaking is possible.’

'We are daily expecting British troops. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that we are to be abandoned by the Government. Our existence depends on England,' is what Mr. Power, British Consular Agent, telegraphed from Khartoum on March 23rd.

It was in vain ; notwithstanding every appeal the British Government determined to refuse, until too late, the assistance asked for.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GORDON RELIEF EXPEDITION.

Gordon's Situation at Khartoum — Troops moved up the Nile — The Vote of Credit — Ministerial Declarations — Retreat cut off — Instructions to General Stephenson — The Rival Routes — Lord Wolseley's plans adopted — Correspondence thereon — Observations.

GORDON'S situation at Khartoum in the meantime may be learned from what follows.

On the 27th February, 1884, he issued a Proclamation to the inhabitants of the Soudan stating that he would be compelled to use severe measures against those who did not desist from rebellion, and also that 'British troops are now on their way, and in a few days will reach Khartoum.'

In a despatch, on the same day, to Sir. E. Baring, Gordon said :—

'You must remember that when evacuation is carried out Mahdi will come down here, and by agents will not let Egypt be quiet. Of course my duty is evacuation, and to do the best I can for establishing a quiet government. The first I hope to accomplish. The second is a more difficult task, and with care and time can be accomplished. Remember that once Khartoum belongs to the Mahdi, the task will be more difficult.

'If you decide on smashing Mahdi then send up another 100,000Z., and send up 200 infantry troops to Wady Halfa, and an officer to Dongola under pretence to look out quarters for troops. Leave Souakim and Massowah alone. I repeat that evacuation is possible, but you will feel effect in Egypt and be forced to enter into a far more serious affair to guard Egypt.'

Gordon then announced the possibility of his going personally to the Mahdi. But this was at once objected to by the British Government.

While Gordon was sending almost daily expressions of his view as to the only way of carrying out the policy of eventual evacuation, it was also becoming clear to him that he would very soon be cut off from the rest of Egypt. His first remark on this subject was to express 'the conviction that I shall be caught in Khartoum;' and he wrote,—'Even if I was mean enough to escape I have no power to do so.' The accuracy of this forecast was speedily demonstrated. Within a few days communications with Khartoum were interrupted, and although subsequently restored for a time, the rising of the riparian tribes rendered the receipt and despatch of messages exceedingly uncertain. On the 8th of April, however, Gordon succeeded in getting the following message through to Sir Evelyn Baring:—

'I have telegraphed to Sir Samuel Baker to make an appeal to British and American millionaires to give me 300,000*l.* to engage Turkish troops from the Sultan and send them here. This will settle the Soudan and the Mahdi for ever. For my part I think you will agree with me. I do not see the fun of being caught here to walk about the streets for years as a dervish with sandalled feet; not that (D.V.) I will ever be taken alive. It would be the climax of meanness, after I had borrowed money from the people here, had called on them to sell their grain at a low price, &c., to go and abandon them without using every effort to relieve them, whether these efforts are diplomatically correct or not; and I feel sure, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support—and every man professing himself a gentleman—in private. Nothing could be more meagre than your telegram—"Osman Digna's followers have been dispersed." Surely something more than this was required by me.'

Eight days later, he wrote as follows:—

'As far as I can understand the situation is this—You state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zubeir. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. I shall hold out here as long as I can, and if I can suppress the rebellious I shall do so. If I cannot I shall retire to the Equator, and leave you the indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Senaar, Kassala,

Berber, and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under greater difficulties if you retain peace in Egypt.'

The complete investment or siege of Khartoum may be considered as having commenced on this date.

When Gordon first began to perceive that he would get no material help from his Government, he made several propositions which would, if adopted, have relieved them from further responsibility. As indicated in the foregoing telegrams one was to make an appeal to international philanthropy, and by employing Turkish troops smash the Mahdi. Another was that he should steam up the Nile, and taking Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial Province in the name of the King of the Belgians, join hands with Stanley, or whoever else might represent the King, on the Congo.

On the 16th of April a cloud fell over what was happening at Khartoum.

While communications were still maintained, Gordon sent his account of his first action with the rebels, which showed not only the kind of enemy he had to deal with, but also the sort of men on whom he had to depend for the defence of Khartoum. On the 17th of March he described in the following words an action on the previous day :—

' At eight a.m. on the 16th two steamers started for Halfiyeh. Bashi-Bazouks and some regulars advanced across plain towards rebels. At ten a.m. the regulars were in square opposite centre of rebels' position, and Bashi-Bazouks were extended in their line to their right. A gun with the regulars then opened fire. Very soon after this a body of about sixty rebel horsemen charged down a little to the right of centre of Bashi-Bazouks' line. The latter fired a volley, then turned and fled. The horsemen galloped towards the square, which they immediately broke. The whole force then retreated slowly towards the fort with their rifles shouldered. The horsemen continued to ride along flanks cutting off stragglers. The men made no effort to stand, and the gun was abandoned, with sixty-three rounds and fifteen cases of reserve

ammunition. The rebels advanced, and retreat of our men was so rapid that the Arabs on foot had no chance of attacking. Pursuit ceased about a mile from stockade, and the men rallied. We brought in the wounded. Nothing could be more dismal than seeing these horsemen, and some men even on camels, pursuing close to troops, who, with arms shouldered, plodded their way back.'

In fact, this fight was a massacre, as the Egyptian soldiers did not attempt the least resistance. Colonel Stewart, who commanded in person, was wounded. The two Pashas under him were subsequently convicted of treachery and shot.

On the 25th of March Gordon felt compelled to disarm 250 Bashi-Bazouks, who refused to move, and on that and other days he engaged the rebels from his steamers, inflicting serious loss upon them. But he would not risk any further fighting on land. Even at this early stage of the siege Gordon was looking into the future, with a firm sense of duty and a courageous resolve to baffle the enemy. He telegraphed, 'For the present and for two months hence we are as safe here as at Cairo;' but a few days later he wrote, 'We have provisions for five months and are hemmed in.'

On the 25th of June the garrison heard of the fall of Berber. The news was brought by the English Consul, Mr. Cuzzi, who was sent in by the rebels to inform Gordon that the one connecting link between him and the outer world had fallen into the hands of the Mahdi.

Long before the summer of 1884, it was evident that the position of Gordon at Khartoum had become so critical, that if he were to be rescued at all, it could only be by the despatch of a British force. As far back as April 23rd, Earl Granville telegraphed to Mr. Egerton at Cairo, instructing him to forward a cypher message to Gordon asking what would 'be

the force necessary to secure his *removal*, its amount, character, the route for access to Khartoum, and time of operation.'

Early in May, war preparations were commenced in England, and on the 10th of the month the military authorities in Cairo received instructions to prepare for the despatch in October of an expedition for the relief of the Soudanese capital. Twelve thousand camels were ordered to be purchased and held in readiness for a forward march in the autumn.

On the 16th May a half-battalion of English troops was moved up the Nile to Wady Halfa. A few weeks later some other positions on the Nile were occupied by portions of the Army of Occupation. Naval officers were also sent up the river to examine and report upon the cataracts and other impediments to navigation. Still it was not till the 5th August that Mr. Gladstone rose in the House of Commons to move a vote of credit of 300,000*l.* to enable the Government to undertake operations for the relief of Gordon.

The Government policy on the subject of Gordon had been repeatedly attacked in Parliament. On July the 8th Lord Hartington formally declared to the House of Commons that it was not the intention of the Government to despatch an expedition for the relief of Gordon, unless it were clearly shown that such were the only means by which the General and those dependent on him could be relieved. 'We have received,' added the Secretary of State for War, 'no information making it desirable that we should depart from that decision.' Urged on, however, by the public press, and plied, week after week, and almost day after day, with questions in the House of Commons, the Government at last brought forward the vote of credit. The money was granted, and the War

Office strained every nerve to make up for the time which had been lost.

On the 20th July Gordon sent a message asking where the reinforcements were, and what was their number. On the 30th, he announced, 'Retreat is impossible. I recommend as a route for troops Wady Halfa, but fear it is too late.' On the 31st, he expressed himself to Sir Evelyn Baring as follows:— 'You ask me to state cause and intention of staying at Khartoum. I stay at Khartoum because Arabs have shut us up and will not let us out.'

The views of the British Government as to the rescue of Gordon were communicated by the Marquis of Hartington to General Stephenson, commanding the Army of Occupation, on the 8th August. The Government, the former wrote, were not convinced that it would be impossible for Gordon to secure the withdrawal from Khartoum, either by the employment of force or by pacific means, of the Egyptian garrisons, and of such of the inhabitants as might desire to leave. Nevertheless, he added, 'Her Majesty's Government were of opinion that the time had arrived when some further measures for obtaining accurate information as to his position, and if necessary, for rendering him assistance, should be adopted.'

As to what 'further measures' were to be adopted considerable difference of opinion existed amongst the advisers of the Government.

It was agreed that there were but two routes by which Khartoum could be approached by an expedition. One by way of the Nile, and the other *viâ* Souakim and Berber, but which of the two presented the least difficulty, was a point upon which the highest authorities differed.

The first involved sending the force a distance of

1650 miles from its base at Cairo, by a river in which were innumerable obstacles in the way of cataracts, rocks, and shoals. The expedition would have to proceed against the stream, thus making progress slow, and in boats, every one of which would have to be specially constructed for the purpose.


The second, in addition to the journey of 200 miles by the Nile from Berber to Khartoum, necessitated a march from Souakim to Berber, of some 280 miles over a country furnished only with a few wells, the supply from which might have to be supplemented by water to be carried by the expedition, thereby vastly increasing the amount of transport necessary.

In either case there was the almost absolute certainty that the march would have to be made in the face of an opposing force.

General Stephenson, who may be considered as the highest authority on the subject, was in Cairo, and therefore in a certain sense on the spot. He had, moreover, the advantage of conferring with Commander Hammill of the *Monarch*, and other officers, who had for weeks previously been engaged on the Nile in examining into the facilities for getting steamers and boats past the cataracts, and other obstacles in the way of river navigation. His opinion was strongly adverse to the Nile route, and in favour of that by Souakim and Berber.

Lord Wolseley, however, basing his calculations on the success of the Red River Expedition, had formed an opposite opinion to that of General Stephenson, and Lord Wolseley being all powerful at the War Office, his views were adopted by the Government.

On the 15th of August Lord Hartington further explained his views of the measures to be adopted, insisting that the movement must be made by the Nile



Valley, instead of by the Souakim-Berber route, with the sole and exclusive object of relieving Gordon, adding, 'This renders it essential that, in framing any plans for the movement of troops south of Wady Halfa, the possibility of being obliged to advance as far as Khartoum itself should be included in and form a necessary part of such plans.' His Lordship at the same time declared it to be essentially necessary to provide for the return of the troops before the end of the winter season.

Lord Hartington telegraphed to Stephenson to report fully as to what he proposed, and to state the number of the force and of camels which would be required. On the 21st, General Stephenson telegraphed to Lord Hartington, with the information asked for, adding, 'My own opinion still is in favour of the Souakim-Berber route:—

'Should this be adopted, Egyptian troops should be sent to New Dongola, consisting of two battalions, one regiment of cavalry, one battery of artillery; one English battalion retained Wady Halfa; half-battalion Egyptian, Korosko; and one English and one and a half battalions Egyptian at Assouan, leaving about 2000 Egyptians, with marines available for garrisoning Souakim and line of communication to Berber.'

But Lord Hartington was evidently too much impressed by the arguments of Lord Wolseley to be inclined for further discussion. On the 22nd August he wrote:—

'I gather from the telegraphic correspondence which I have had with you since my despatch of the 15th instant that, in acting on the instructions communicated to you in my despatch of the 8th instant, you have to this date based your preparations on a scheme of operations which is substantially that sketched out in the report of Commander Hammill, dated 4th August. I also learn from your telegram of the 21st instant that, while it is in your opinion possible by the means indicated in that report to send the small force described in my despatch of the 8th to New Dongola, it would not be practicable

by those means to push forward such a force as would in your opinion be required to reach Khartoum, and to bring it back within the next winter. Influenced by this consideration, you state that your opinion is still, if such an operation should be undertaken, in favour of the Souakim-Berber route. For the reasons stated in my despatch of the 8th, I am not now prepared to authorise a movement on that line.'

Then came the intimation that Wolseley was to command the expedition.

To Lieut.-General Stephenson.

' War Office, August 26, 1884, Midnight.

' After anxious consideration, Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that it is unjust to you to ask you to be responsible for directing an operation which, after full knowledge of the plan, you consider to be impracticable. They have, therefore, decided to send Lord Wolseley to take temporarily the chief command in Egypt. Government highly appreciate the manner in which you have carried out the important and difficult duties of your command, and earnestly hope that you may feel yourself able to remain in Egypt while Lord Wolseley is there, and assist him with your advice. Lord Wolseley goes out with Lord Northbrook.'

In making the choice of routes, the one vital question of time seems to have been insufficiently considered. Gordon was known to be hard pressed, and the object should have been for the expedition for his rescue to arrive at its destination with as little delay as possible. From Souakim to Berber occupied Hicks Pasha less than three weeks, and from Berber to Khartoum five or six days more ; of course, it is not pretended that a force so large as Wolseley had under his orders could march nearly as rapidly as Hicks' small detachment. But it may be argued that assuming that the route by Souakim was *possible*, and of this there seems no doubt, the relief expedition, even if it had to fight its way step by step, must eventually have arrived in much less time than the many months occupied by Wolseley on the river route.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROGRESS TO DONGOLA.

Preparations for the Expedition to relieve Gordon—The Whalers—The Canadian *Voyageurs*—Lord Wolseley appointed to command—Composition of the force—Lord Wolseley's Instructions—Arrival of Troops and Stores—Lord Wolseley's Arrival—Progress—News from Berber—Massacre of Colonel Stewart's Party—Movements of the different Regiments—Cataracts on the Nile—Experience with the Whalers—Passage of the Steamers—The Yarrow Boats—The Camel Corps—Arrival at Dongola.

THE Nile route having been decided on, preparations on a large scale were begun.

The first thing was to obtain boats for the transport up the Nile; and for these, contracts were at once entered into with various firms in England. Eight hundred in all were ordered. From their shape they were called whalers, and they were to be each thirty feet in length, with six feet six inches beam, and a draught of two feet six inches. Each was to weigh nine hundred-weight, and was to be fitted with twelve oars and two masts with lug sails. Every boat was to be fitted to carry a dozen men, viz., two boatmen and ten soldiers, besides provisions and ammunition. The price of each boat was 75*l*.

Eight steam-pinnaces were equipped for the expedition, as well as two stern-wheel paddle-boats, built by Yarrow & Co. of Poplar.

At the same time a contract was entered into with Messrs. Thos. Cook & Son, the well-known tourist

agents, for the transport of the entire force as far as Sarras, just above the Second or Great Cataract.

To assist in the Nile navigation 380 Canadian boatmen, called '*Voyageurs*,' were engaged; 290 of them were French or English-speaking Canadians, with a few half-breeds, all from the St. Maurice or Ottawa districts, and about fifty were Iroquois Indians from Caughnawaga. The remainder were Salteaux from Manitoba. They came in charge of Lieut.-Colonel Denison of the Governor-General's body-guard, and formerly aide-de-camp to Lord Wolseley in the Red River Expedition. The whole force was recruited, organized, and embarked within twelve days, although a large proportion had to come a distance of 1500 miles to Montreal.* In addition to the Canadians 300 Kroomen were obtained from the West Coast of Africa to carry stores round the cataracts.

All the Nile steamers in serviceable condition belonging to the Egyptian Government, including these under contract to Messrs. Cook & Son, were requisitioned for the transport of the whalers and men of the expedition.

It next became requisite to fix the numbers of the force to be placed under Wolseley's command. In doing this allowance had to be made for the many posts which it would be necessary to establish in order to keep up the line of communication.

It was at first arranged that not more than 5000 men should form the Expedition, but later on the number was raised to 7000. Two regiments were ordered

* It subsequently transpired that many of the '*voyageurs*' had absolutely no experience in the management of boats, and were worse than useless. There were some excellent men amongst them, and more particularly among the Indians, but the general opinion was that the blue-jackets from the fleet could have performed the work far more efficiently, besides being sober and amenable to discipline. When, in addition, it is stated that the Canadians received very high salaries, the wisdom of engaging these men for the Nile expedition appears open to much doubt.

from India, three battalions from Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus, one battalion of the Royal Scots, from Barbadoes, and several companies of the Royal Engineers and some batteries of the Royal Artillery, with drafts of the Commissariat Transport and Army Hospital Corps, from England.

These, with the troops already in Egypt, and a contingent of seamen and marines, made up a total force of 14,000 men, from which Lord Wolseley was to select the 7000 required for the Expedition. Colonels Sir Charles Wilson, Brackenbury, Harrison, Henderson, and Maurice, and Lord Anson, were appointed to the force for special service. General Sir Redvers Buller was named Chief of the Staff, and General Earle was told off to command a brigade.

The instructions given to Lord Wolseley stated that the primary object of the Expedition was to bring away Gordon and Stewart from Khartoum ; and when that purpose should be effected, no further offensive operations of any kind were to be undertaken, for the British Government was of opinion that Egyptian rule in the Soudan should cease, or certainly not extend beyond Wady Halfa. Lord Wolseley was not to take any steps for the relief of Kassala or Senaar, and he was expressly forbidden to extend his operations to Darfour, the Bhar Ghazal, or the Equatorial Provinces. The Government even questioned the necessity of advancing as far as Khartoum, and expressed the desire that the sphere of military operations should be limited as much as possible. Nevertheless, when a safe retreat should have been secured for Gordon and Stewart, together with the Egyptian troops and functionaries, Lord Wolseley was to make arrangements concerning the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartoum. He was informed that Egypt would be prepared to pay a

reasonable subsidy to any chief or number of chiefs sufficiently powerful to maintain order along the Valley of the Nile from Wady Halfa to Khartoum, and who would agree to remain at peace with Egypt, to repress any raids on Egyptian territory, to encourage trade, and to prevent by all possible means any expeditions for the capture and sale of slaves; and he was authorised to conclude any arrangements which fulfilled these general conditions.

Throughout the month of August the dockyards and arsenals in Great Britain were in full activity, and every effort was made to get the expedition forward in time to take advantage of the high Nile. During the latter part of the month, and during September, troops and stores were arriving almost daily in Alexandria and were being forwarded at once to the front.

One may judge of the measures taken from the fact that on the 1st September, within sixteen days after the order for the Nile boats had been given, many of them were already shipped, and a fortnight later 400, or half the total number, had been sent off.

The whalers on arriving in Egypt were at once forwarded by rail and river to Assiout. Thence they were towed by steamer to Assouan, over 300 miles further, and just below the First Cataract. Here most of them were placed upon trucks for conveyance by a railway eight miles long to Shellal, on the south side of the Cataract. Some few were hauled through the rapids and past the Isle of Philæ. Once through the Cataract all was fair sailing as far as Wady Halfa, 200 miles further, where the Second Cataract forms another obstacle to Nile navigation.

Lord Wolseley arrived at Alexandria in company with Lord Northbrook on the 9th September, and left the same day for Cairo.

Meanwhile the Nile from Assiout to the Second Cataract presented a scene of unwonted bustle and activity. Posts were established at Assiout, Assouan, Wady Halfa, and other places, for the purpose of forwarding supplies. Coaling stations were provided for the steamers, and almost interminable processions of steamers, barges, whalers, and native craft, passed up daily with men, horses and stores.

Prior to Lord Wolseley's departure from England Sir Evelyn Wood and Commander Hammill had started up the Nile to superintend the operations. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Sussex was conveyed from Assouan to Wady Halfa by the *Benisouef* steamer, and then hurried with three months' rations for a thousand men, on to Dongola, on board some of the boats which the Mudir had in the meanwhile despatched to Sarras. The Royal Sussex was replaced at Wady Halfa by the Staffordshire Regiment, and then the Mounted Infantry came up by water to Sarras, and proceeded to Dongola. Throughout the earlier part of September the troops were constantly advancing, Lord Wolseley having expressed the desire that they should be pushed on to Dongola without waiting for his arrival. The men were conveyed by train to Assiout and thence by steamer to Assouan.

A large number of the whalers had already arrived at Wady Halfa, when on September the 27th Lord Wolseley, who had completed his plan of operations, left Cairo with his staff for Upper Egypt. Journeying along the Nile in the yacht *Ferouz*, which the Khedive had placed as his disposal, he made frequent halts on the way, inspecting the military arrangements and visiting various points of interest. Arriving at Assouan on October 1st, he inspected the Egyptian and British troops encamped on a rocky broken plateau of considerable elevation,

situated on the right bank of the Nile, where batteries had been erected to command the town, the railway, and the main caravan roads. Reserves of ammunition and stores were kept in barges on the river below the camp. Lord Wolseley, after visiting the Temple of Philæ, again embarked with Sir Redvers Buller and his staff on board the *Ferouz*. The latter had been got safely through the First Cataract in the meantime, [and now started southwards for Wady Halfa.

Even before Lord Wolseley had left Cairo Generals Earle and Sir Herbert Stewart had already reached Wady Halfa. The latter with his staff at once set out for Dongola, and the party arrived at their destination on September 30th, at the same time as two hundred and fifty men of the Mounted Infantry, who made the journey up the Nile from Sarras in 'nuggars,' or native boats.

On the 5th October Lord Wolseley reached Wady Halfa. This had become temporarily the base of the British operations as well, as the permanent chief depôt of commissariat and ordnance stores for the expedition. A military hospital with accommodation for 300 patients was established here. The railway at Wady Halfa, running for a distance of thirty-three miles along the east bank of the Nile, was utilised for forwarding stores, &c., to Sarras. Some of the whalers were landed at Bab-el-Kebir ('the Great Gate') and carried overland above the Cataract, whilst others were hauled through it. A good number of the whalers had already passed the torrent prior to the arrival of Lord Wolseley at Wady Halfa. The first boat, indeed, was hauled up the rapids on September 25th, without any other appliances than its own gear and some short towing-ropes, the operation occupying but a quarter of an

hour, and proving more successful than had been expected. The second boat was then hauled up by means of Commander Hammill's cleverly-arranged tackle, and the operation was carried out even more rapidly and safely.

At Wady Halfa, Wolseley got news respecting Colonel Stewart, which he telegraphed as follows :—

' Wady Halfa, October 5, 1884.

'Stewart bombarded Berber, and taking one steamer and some of the boats, with forty soldiers, proceeded down the river. Other steamers continued bombardment of Berber, and then returned towards Khartoum. Stewart's steamer struck on a rock at El-Kamar, one day's camel journey above Merawi. They arranged for camels to continue journey with Suleiman Wad Gamr, who went on board to undertake to supply camels and guide them, and received a sword and dress ; when they went ashore to start, they were set upon and killed. Suleiman afterwards took the steamer, and killed all but four on board. Express sent out to find out who those four are.'

The statements made by different natives, who subsequently reached Dongola with reports of the murder, varied considerably as to date, time, and place, but as the informants one and all spoke from hearsay, this was not surprising. It was ultimately ascertained that the rumours were perfectly true, and that Colonel Stewart, after accomplishing two-thirds of his journey from Khartoum to Dongola, had been murdered, together with Mr. Power, the British Consul at Khartoum and correspondent of the *Times*, M. Herbin, the French Consul at Khartoum, and a number of Greeks and Egyptians.

From Gordon's despatches and Sir Charles Wilson's subsequent report, it appears that the expedition, consisting of three steamers, left Khartoum on the night of September the 10th, and proceeded to Shendy, where Stewart seems to have landed and left a garrison, and repaired the telegraph from Khartoum. The steamers

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Consuls (Mr. Power and M. Herbin), and Hassan Effendi, and entered a house belonging to a blind man named Fakri Wad Etman, to arrange with Suleiman for the purchase of camels to take us all down to Dongola. None of the four had any arms, with the exception of Colonel Stewart, who carried a small revolver in his pocket. While they were in the house the rest of us began to land. Shortly afterwards we saw Suleiman come out of the house with a copper water-pot in his hand and make signs to the people who were gathered near the place. They immediately divided into two parties, one entering the house and the other rushing towards us on the banks, shouting and waving their spears. I was with the party which had landed when they charged down. We all threw ourselves into the river, whereupon the natives fired, and killed some of those in the water; several others were drowned, and the rest were speared as they approached the shore. I swam to the island, and hid there till dark, when I was made prisoner with some others, and sent to Berti. I heard that Colonel Stewart and the two Europeans were killed at once, but Hassan Effendi held the blind man before him, so that they could not spear him. They accordingly spared his life, and he afterwards escaped to Berber. Two artillerymen, two sailors, and three natives, are, I believe, still alive at Berber, where they were sent by Suleiman. All the money found on board and in the pockets of the dead, was divided among the murderers, and everything else of value was placed in two boxes and sent under a guard to Berber. The bodies of Colonel Stewart and the others were thrown at once into the river.'

Hussein Ismail, the stoker, did not actually witness the death of Stewart, but heard of it from natives who acknowledged that he fought most desperately for his life, killing one of his assailants and wounding a second one with his revolver.

According to Gordon's subsequently published Diaries, Stewart, Herbin and Power left Khartoum of their own free will. The situation at the time was felt to be desperate. Herbin asked to go. Stewart said he would go if Gordon would exonerate him from deserting. Gordon in reply said that by remaining and being made prisoner Stewart could do no good, whereas by going down and telegraphing Gordon's views, Stewart would be doing him a service. The Greeks, nineteen in number, were sent as a body-guard. Stewart took

course of the Nile comprises a series of dangerous and intricate passages ; the cataracts of Samneh, Ly-Attireh, Ambigole, Tangour, Uckma, Akasha, Dal, following each other in swift succession. The two first are not so difficult, but the rapids of Ambigole which extend some four or five miles, are passable at low Nile, and prove a severe trial even when the water is high. A short distance further, the Tangour cataract bars the way, and it is as difficult of passage as that of Ambigole.

A quantity of dynamite had been sent out from England for blasting the rocks at this and other points, but when it reached Wady Halfa any such proceeding was impracticable, as the river was then too high.

The dynamite being useless, the boats had either to be carried beyond the cataracts or to ascend them, navigated by the Canadians or hauled along by natives specially engaged for the purpose. The difficulties of navigation between Wady Halfa and Samneh were illustrated by the experience of the Royal Engineers.

The detachment of Royal Engineers under Major Forward, numbering fifty-seven, left Sarras in five boats at ten a.m., and by two o'clock next day had just succeeded in making the passage of the nearest cataract. For the greater portion of the distance, seven miles in all, the work was of a most difficult and exhausting description, the current being in some places exceedingly strong, and the banks rough and most unsuitable for towing. The boats were found to be not nearly strong enough for the work for which they were intended. The rudders, too, were found to be too small to be of use, and the Canadians found fault with the boats having been provided with keels, which were not only useless but in the way. The difficulties of the ascent were increased by the falling of the Nile, which, instead of

1650 miles from its base at Cairo, by a river in which were innumerable obstacles in the way of cataracts, rocks, and shoals. The expedition would have to proceed against the stream, thus making progress slow, and in boats, every one of which would have to be specially constructed for the purpose.

The second, in addition to the journey of 200 miles by the Nile from Berber to Khartoum, necessitated a march from Souakim to Berber, of some 280 miles over a country furnished only with a few wells, the supply from which might have to be supplemented by water to be carried by the expedition, thereby vastly increasing the amount of transport necessary.

In either case there was the almost absolute certainty that the march would have to be made in the face of an opposing force.

General Stephenson, who may be considered as the highest authority on the subject, was in Cairo, and therefore in a certain sense on the spot. He had, moreover, the advantage of conferring with Commander Hammill of the *Monarch*, and other officers, who had for weeks previously been engaged on the Nile in examining into the facilities for getting steamers and boats past the cataracts, and other obstacles in the way of river navigation. His opinion was strongly adverse to the Nile route, and in favour of that by Souakim and Berber.

Lord Wolseley, however, basing his calculations on the success of the Red River Expedition, had formed an opposite opinion to that of General Stephenson, and Lord Wolseley being all powerful at the War Office, his views were adopted by the Government.

On the 15th of August Lord Hartington further explained his views of the measures to be adopted, insisting that the movement must be made by the Nile

Valley, instead of by the Souakim-Berber route, with the sole and exclusive object of relieving Gordon, adding, 'This renders it essential that, in framing any plans for the movement of troops south of Wady Halfa, the possibility of being obliged to advance as far as Khartoum itself should be included in and form a necessary part of such plans.' His Lordship at the same time declared it to be essentially necessary to provide for the return of the troops before the end of the winter season.

Lord Hartington telegraphed to Stephenson to report fully as to what he proposed, and to state the number of the force and of camels which would be required. On the 21st, General Stephenson telegraphed to Lord Hartington, with the information asked for, adding, 'My own opinion still is in favour of the Souakim-Berber route:—

'Should this be adopted, Egyptian troops should be sent to New Dongola, consisting of two battalions, one regiment of cavalry, one battery of artillery; one English battalion retained Wady Halfa; half-battalion Egyptian, Korosko; and one English and one and a half battalions Egyptian at Assouan, leaving about 2000 Egyptians, with marines available for garrisoning Souakim and line of communication to Berber.'

But Lord Hartington was evidently too much impressed by the arguments of Lord Wolseley to be inclined for further discussion. On the 22nd August he wrote:—

'I gather from the telegraphic correspondence which I have had with you since my despatch of the 15th instant that, in acting on the instructions communicated to you in my despatch of the 8th instant, you have to this date based your preparations on a scheme of operations which is substantially that sketched out in the report of Commander Hammill, dated 4th August. I also learn from your telegram of the 21st instant that, while it is in your opinion possible by the means indicated in that report to send the small force described in my despatch of the 8th to New Dongola, it would not be practicable

by those means to push forward such a force as would in your opinion be required to reach Khartoum, and to bring it back within the next winter. Influenced by this consideration, you state that your opinion is still, if such an operation should be undertaken, in favour of the Souakim-Berber route. For the reasons stated in my despatch of the 8th, I am not now prepared to authorise a movement on that line.'

Then came the intimation that Wolseley was to command the expedition.

To Lieut.-General Stephenson.

' War Office, August 26, 1884, Midnight.

' After anxious consideration, Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that it is unjust to you to ask you to be responsible for directing an operation which, after full knowledge of the plan, you consider to be impracticable. They have, therefore, decided to send Lord Wolseley to take temporarily the chief command in Egypt. Government highly appreciate the manner in which you have carried out the important and difficult duties of your command, and earnestly hope that you may feel yourself able to remain in Egypt while Lord Wolseley is there, and assist him with your advice. Lord Wolseley goes out with Lord Northbrook.'

In making the choice of routes, the one vital question of time seems to have been insufficiently considered. Gordon was known to be hard pressed, and the object should have been for the expedition for his rescue to arrive at its destination with as little delay as possible. From Souakim to Berber occupied Hicks Pasha less than three weeks, and from Berber to Khartoum five or six days more; of course, it is not pretended that a force so large as Wolseley had under his orders could march nearly as rapidly as Hicks' small detachment. But it may be argued that assuming that the route by Souakim was *possible*, and of this there seems no doubt, the relief expedition, even if it had to fight its way step by step, must eventually have arrived in much less time than the many months occupied by Wolseley on the river route.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROGRESS TO DONGOLA.

Preparations for the Expedition to relieve Gordon—The Whalers—The Canadian *Voyageurs*—Lord Wolseley appointed to command—Composition of the force—Lord Wolseley's Instructions—Arrival of Troops and Stores—Lord Wolseley's Arrival—Progress—News from Berber—Massacre of Colonel Stewart's Party—Movements of the different Regiments—Cataracts on the Nile—Experience with the Whalers—Passage of the Steamers—The Yarrow Boats—The Camel Corps—Arrival at Dongola.

THE Nile route having been decided on, preparations on a large scale were begun.

The first thing was to obtain boats for the transport up the Nile; and for these, contracts were at once entered into with various firms in England. Eight hundred in all were ordered. From their shape they were called whalers, and they were to be each thirty feet in length, with six feet six inches beam, and a draught of two feet six inches. Each was to weigh nine hundred-weight, and was to be fitted with twelve oars and two masts with lug sails. Every boat was to be fitted to carry a dozen men, viz., two boatmen and ten soldiers, besides provisions and ammunition. The price of each boat was 75*l*.

Eight steam-pinnaces were equipped for the expedition, as well as two stern-wheel paddle-boats, built by Yarrow & Co. of Poplar.

At the same time a contract was entered into with Messrs. Thos. Cook & Son, the well-known tourist

agents, for the transport of the entire force as far as Sarras, just above the Second or Great Cataract.

To assist in the Nile navigation 380 Canadian boatmen, called '*Voyageurs*,' were engaged; 290 of them were French or English-speaking Canadians, with a few half-breeds, all from the St. Maurice or Ottawa districts, and about fifty were Iroquois Indians from Caughnawanga. The remainder were Salteaux from Manitoba. They came in charge of Lieut.-Colonel Denison of the Governor-General's body-guard, and formerly aide-de-camp to Lord Wolseley in the Red River Expedition. The whole force was recruited, organized, and embarked within twelve days, although a large proportion had to come a distance of 1500 miles to Montreal.* In addition to the Canadians 300 Kroomen were obtained from the West Coast of Africa to carry stores round the cataracts.

All the Nile steamers in serviceable condition belonging to the Egyptian Government, including these under contract to Messrs. Cook & Son, were requisitioned for the transport of the whalers and men of the expedition.

It next became requisite to fix the numbers of the force to be placed under Wolseley's command. In doing this allowance had to be made for the many posts which it would be necessary to establish in order to keep up the line of communication.

It was at first arranged that not more than 5000 men should form the Expedition, but later on the number was raised to 7000. Two regiments were ordered

* It subsequently transpired that many of the '*voyageurs*' had absolutely no experience in the management of boats, and were worse than useless. There were some excellent men amongst them, and more particularly among the Indians, but the general opinion was that the blue-jackets from the fleet could have performed the work far more efficiently, besides being sober and amenable to discipline. When, in addition, it is stated that the Canadians received very high salaries, the wisdom of engaging these men for the Nile expedition appears open to much doubt.

from India, three battalions from Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus, one battalion of the Royal Scots, from Barbadoes, and several companies of the Royal Engineers and some batteries of the Royal Artillery, with drafts of the Commissariat Transport and Army Hospital Corps, from England.

These, with the troops already in Egypt, and a contingent of seamen and marines, made up a total force of 14,000 men, from which Lord Wolseley was to select the 7000 required for the Expedition. Colonels Sir Charles Wilson, Brackenbury, Harrison, Henderson, and Maurice, and Lord Anson, were appointed to the force for special service. General Sir Redvers Buller was named Chief of the Staff, and General Earle was told off to command a brigade.

The instructions given to Lord Wolseley stated that the primary object of the Expedition was to bring away Gordon and Stewart from Khartoum ; and when that purpose should be effected, no further offensive operations of any kind were to be undertaken, for the British Government was of opinion that Egyptian rule in the Soudan should cease. or certainly not extend beyond Wady Halfa. Lord Wolseley was not to take any steps for the relief of Kassala or Senaar, and he was expressly forbidden to extend his operations to Darfour, the Bhar Ghazal, or the Equatorial Provinces. The Government even questioned the necessity of advancing as far as Khartoum, and expressed the desire that the sphere of military operations should be limited as much as possible. Nevertheless, when a safe retreat should have been secured for Gordon and Stewart, together with the Egyptian troops and functionaries, Lord Wolseley was to make arrangements concerning the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartoum. He was informed that Egypt would be prepared to pay a

situated on the right bank of the Nile, where batteries had been erected to command the town, the railway, and the main caravan roads. Reserves of ammunition and stores were kept in barges on the river below the camp. Lord Wolseley, after visiting the Temple of Philæ, again embarked with Sir Redvers Buller and his staff on board the *Ferouz*. The latter had been got safely through the First Cataract in the meantime, and now started southwards for Wady Halfa.

Even before Lord Wolseley had left Cairo Generals Earle and Sir Herbert Stewart had already reached Wady Halfa. The latter with his staff at once set out for Dongola, and the party arrived at their destination on September 30th, at the same time as two hundred and fifty men of the Mounted Infantry, who made the journey up the Nile from Sarras in 'nuggars,' or native boats.

On the 5th October Lord Wolseley reached Wady Halfa. This had become temporarily the base of the British operations as well, as the permanent chief depôt of commissariat and ordnance stores for the expedition. A military hospital with accommodation for 300 patients was established here. The railway at Wady Halfa, running for a distance of thirty-three miles along the east bank of the Nile, was utilised for forwarding stores, &c., to Sarras. Some of the whalers were landed at Bab-el-Kebir ('the Great Gate') and carried overland above the Cataract, whilst others were hauled through it. A good number of the whalers had already passed the torrent prior to the arrival of Lord Wolseley at Wady Halfa. The first boat, indeed, was hauled up the rapids on September 25th, without any other appliances than its own gear and some short towing-ropes, the operation occupying but a quarter of an

hour, and proving more successful than had been expected. The second boat was then hauled up by means of Commander Hammill's cleverly-arranged tackle, and the operation was carried out even more rapidly and safely.

At Wady Halfa, Wolseley got news respecting Colonel Stewart, which he telegraphed as follows :—

' Wady Halfa, October 5, 1884.

'Stewart bombarded Berber, and taking one steamer and some of the boats, with forty soldiers, proceeded down the river. Other steamers continued bombardment of Berber, and then returned towards Khartoum. Stewart's steamer struck on a rock at El-Kamar, one day's camel journey above Merawi. They arranged for camels to continue journey with Suleiman Wad Gamr, who went on board to undertake to supply camels and guide them, and received a sword and dress ; when they went ashore to start, they were set upon and killed. Suleiman afterwards took the steamer, and killed all but four on board. Express sent out to find out who those four are.'

The statements made by different natives, who subsequently reached Dongola with reports of the murder, varied considerably as to date, time, and place, but as the informants one and all spoke from hearsay, this was not surprising. It was ultimately ascertained that the rumours were perfectly true, and that Colonel Stewart, after accomplishing two-thirds of his journey from Khartoum to Dongola, had been murdered, together with Mr. Power, the British Consul at Khartoum and correspondent of the *Times*, M. Herbin, the French Consul at Khartoum, and a number of Greeks and Egyptians.

From Gordon's despatches and Sir Charles Wilson's subsequent report, it appears that the expedition, consisting of three steamers, left Khartoum on the night of September the 10th, and proceeded to Shendy, where Stewart seems to have landed and left a garrison, and repaired the telegraph from Khartoum. The steamers

then went on to Berber, and, after shelling the forts, two of them returned southward under the command of Gordon's 'Admiral' Kashm-el-Mus, while Stewart and his companions tried to reach Dongola with the steam-launch, *Abbas*, which carried one gun, and had in tow two boats full of men and women. All went well with the party until they approached Abu Hamid, when the rebels swarming along the shore opened so severe a fire that, those on board the launch had to cast the boats adrift. The boats fell into the hands of the rebels below Abu Hamid, and the Greeks and Egyptians they contained were taken in captivity to Berber. The *Abbas*, however, pursued its course through the country inhabited by the Monassir tribe, with forty-four men on board.

On the 18th September, while the steamer was approaching Boni Island, just below the Kubenat cataract, it ran upon a hidden rock, got caught when partly over, and was badly injured towards the stern. What afterwards occurred was subsequently related by an Egyptian stoker, named Hussein Ismail, who, taken prisoner at the time, ultimately escaped from the rebels and joined General Earle's column.

He said as follows :—

'We were passing at the time through Sheik Wad Gamr's country, and had seen the people running away into the hills on both sides of the river. When it was found that the steamer could not be got off the rock, the small boat (a dingy with which the launch was provided) was filled with useful things, and sent to a little island near us. Four trips were made. Then Colonel Stewart drove a nail into the steamer's gun, filed off the projecting head, and threw both gun and ammunition overboard. The people now came down to the right bank in great numbers, shouting, "Give us peace and grain." We answered, "Peace." Suleiman Wad Gamr himself was in a small house near the bank, and he came out and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear, but he added, that the soldiers must be unarmed or the people would be afraid of them. Colonel Stewart, after talking it over with the others, then crossed in the boat, with the two European

Consuls (Mr. Power and M. Herbin), and Hassan Effendi, and entered a house belonging to a blind man named Fakri Wad Etman, to arrange with Suleiman for the purchase of camels to take us all down to Dongola. None of the four had any arms, with the exception of Colonel Stewart, who carried a small revolver in his pocket. While they were in the house the rest of us began to land. Shortly afterwards we saw Suleiman come out of the house with a copper water-pot in his hand and make signs to the people who were gathered near the place. They immediately divided into two parties, one entering the house and the other rushing towards us on the banks, shouting and waving their spears. I was with the party which had landed when they charged down. We all threw ourselves into the river, whereupon the natives fired, and killed some of those in the water; several others were drowned, and the rest were speared as they approached the shore. I swam to the island, and hid there till dark, when I was made prisoner with some others, and sent to Berti. I heard that Colonel Stewart and the two Europeans were killed at once, but Hassan Effendi held the blind man before him, so that they could not spear him. They accordingly spared his life, and he afterwards escaped to Berber. Two artillerymen, two sailors, and three natives, are, I believe, still alive at Berber, where they were sent by Suleiman. All the money found on board and in the pockets of the dead, was divided among the murderers, and everything else of value was placed in two boxes and sent under a guard to Berber. The bodies of Colonel Stewart and the others were thrown at once into the river.'

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According to Gordon's subsequently published Diaries, Stewart, Herbin and Power left Khartoum of their own free will. The situation at the time was felt to be desperate. Herbin asked to go. Stewart said he would go if Gordon would exonerate him from deserting. Gordon in reply said that by remaining and being made prisoner Stewart could do no good, whereas by going down and telegraphing Gordon's views, Stewart would be doing him a service. The Greeks, nineteen in number, were sent as a body-guard. Stewart took

with him the journal of events at Khartoum, from 1st March to 9th September, with the Foreign Office cypher, all the documents relating to Gordon's mission, and 60*l.* in gold.* As to Gordon's reason for not accompanying the party he stated in his Diary that he 'couldn't if he would, as the people were not such fools as to let him, and that he wouldn't if he could, desert them under the circumstances.' He added that 'it was generally believed that the passage of the *Abbas* down was an absolute certainty without danger.'

Forty whalers arrived in tow of the steamer *Ferouz* on the 16th October, and ten days later the Canadians also reached Wady Halfa. Wolseley now gave orders for the troops to hurry forward with all possible despatch. There was as yet but a mere advance guard at Dongola, including the Mounted Infantry, the first battalion of the Royal Sussex, some squadrons of the 19th Hussars and the Camel Corps; the main body of the expeditionary force being still at Wady Halfa, or even lower down the Nile. However, on November the 2nd, the general advance practically commenced by the South Staffordshire regiment embarking for Dongola.

The start of the South Staffordshire was followed by that of the Cornwall regiment, some detachments of the Essex Regiment, the Royal Engineers, the West Kent, the Royal Irish, the Gordon Highlanders, and such portions of the Camel Corps, Artillery, and Transport Service as had not yet moved forward. While the mounted detachments proceeded by road along the western bank of the Nile, the foot-soldiers rowed up the river in the whale-boats.

From Wady Halfa to Dal, a distance of 123 miles,

* A letter from the Mahdi states that all these fell into his hands.

the course of the Nile comprises a series of dangerous rapids and intricate passages ; the cataracts of Samneh, Wady-Attireh, Ambigole, Tangour, Uckma, Akasha, and Dal, following each other in swift succession. The two first are not so difficult, but the rapids of Ambigole which extend some four or five miles, are impassable at low Nile, and prove a severe trial even when the water is high. A short distance further, the Tangour cataract bars the way, and it is as difficult of passage as that of Ambigole.

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running quietly and smoothly as before, now rushed in broken water over the shallows, and increased the number of rapids indefinitely. Two new and formidable rapids made their appearance in two days between Sarras and Samneh. The passage of the rapids was aided by natives sent down from Dongola. Without their help the soldiers could never have hauled the boats up. The cargoes had to be taken out at the foot of the cataracts and carried to the upper end. It was not till noon on the 5th of November that Major Dorward arrived at Ambukol, the voyage occupying over a month. Three of the boats which had been injured in the ascent were repaired with tin and lead plates and made ready to continue the journey. The work of navigation was described as most severe, beginning at daylight, and only ending when it became too dark for the men to see what they were doing. The crews were frequently breast-deep in water.

To provide for the wants and the relief of the men on the way, a series of stations had been established at Muhrat Wells, Ambigole, Akasha, Tangour, Sarka-Matto (or Dal), Absaret, Kaibar, and Abu Fatmeh, there being on an average one for every thirty-three miles of the river's course between Sarras and Dongola. Each station was commanded by an officer, with a detachment of Egyptian soldiers under him, and a commissariat dépôt.

The hauling of the steamers sent up the river for the conveyance of stores or for towing purposes proved extremely difficult. It was necessary to sling them in cables passed under their keels and secure them with steel hawsers round their hulls, and even then accidents frequently befell them. Some thousands of men were employed in hauling the vessels through the intricate and winding passages among the granite rocks that lie

in the bed of the river. According to a correspondent the various gangs of haulers took their stand at different points, and with much shouting to each other contrived by joint action to bring the vessel's head, this way or that, in the direction of safety and forward progress. Some of them were on the river's bank, others mounted upon the rocks in mid-channel, wading or swimming to and fro ; but, for those who had to cross the river at a wider part, a hawser was stretched right across, fastened to the shore at each end, and a boat, with some running tackle laid on the hawser, was used to ferry them over. The sailors and soldiers worked well, assisted by 1500 Dongola men and 800 men from Esneh, but the task was a most arduous one. The S.S. *Ghizeh* passed successfully through the cataract of Bab-el-Ambak beyond Sarras, but on reaching Tangour, where the passage is very difficult, she was wrecked and sunk, only her masts and funnel being above water. At one moment it seemed as if the *Nassif-el-Kheir* steamer would meet with a similar fate, for it was only by the greatest exertions and by a wonderful display of skill that she was eventually got past the rapids at Samneh. After a great deal of trouble she was hauled successfully through the first two gates, but three more lay before her, including a very difficult one where the passage is extremely narrow. She was fairly within this gate when she suddenly struck and grated against the rocks, two of the hawsers parting at the same time, with the result that she drifted towards the western shore and narrowly escaped being dashed to pieces. A boat bringing up a fresh hawser was then wrecked and the crew were only saved with difficulty. A moment afterwards, when the steamer was again in motion, the port paddle was smashed against the rocks and so injured that the engines worked unavailingly. The head hawser parted

at the same time, and the steamer again swung to the western bank, held by a small hawser only. Those which had parted were a six-and-a-half-inch grass, and a five-and-a-half-inch hemp, and had been considered strong enough to resist any strain placed on them. The only course now was to secure the steamer as well as possible, and repair the paddle. This was done, and eventually, after another effort—a force of six thousand men being employed for seven hours—the *Nassif-el-Kheir* was hauled through the final gates with comparatively little damage. To Commander Hammill and Lieut. Reed of the *Monarch* the credit of getting up the steamers is chiefly due.

About the same time the twin screw-steamer *Montgomery* reached Samneh, having passed through the western channel, thus avoiding the full force of the cataract. The first of the steam-pinnaces from England was likewise launched at Sarras, being successfully hauled down an improvised slip from the railway to the river, although the drop was a steep one, and the engineers had no proper appliances for such work. One of the stern-wheel steamers built by Messrs. Yarrow & Co. was brought by barges in 700 pieces to Samneh, and riveted up and launched there. This vessel, which was 80 feet in length, 18 feet in beam, and only 16 inches in draught, was capable of carrying from 400 to 500 men, and a machine-gun.

As may be supposed, there was no slight trouble in forwarding the stores which had been collected at Wady Halfa to Dongola. Between Wady Halfa and Muhrat Wells they went by rail; between Muhrat Wells and Ambigole, by camel; between Ambigole and Tangour, and thence to Korti, by native boats and by whalers.

The Camel Corps, above referred to, which had been formed in accordance with Lord Wolseley's instructions

at an early stage, numbered in all some 1500 men, and consisted of detachments from the Household Cavalry, and other mounted regiments, and from the Guards, each forming a separate division — Heavy Cavalry, Light Cavalry, and Guards, with a fourth regiment of Mounted Infantry. The detachment of Marines was attached to the Guards.

The idea of forming such a corps was by no means novel, having been borrowed from Napoleon I., who, when in Egypt, organized a similar force, mounted on dromedaries. This French Dromedary Corps, it is said would march ninety miles in a day over the desert, without provisions or water. The practice, when in action, was for the animals to lie down, and for the men to get behind them and fire over them.

Lord Wolseley's Camel Corps met on the road from Wady Halfa to Dongola with frequent mishaps and delays. The camels, only really at home on their native sands, often got so entangled amongst the rocks and blocks of granite, that they could with difficulty be persuaded to advance. As the march was made along the right bank of the Nile, it became necessary at Dongola to ferry the animals over the river, and considerable time was spent in this operation, as boats were not always ready at the crossing places.

On the 28th October Wolseley and his staff left Wady Halfa by train for Sarras, whence they proceeded by camels to Hannek, escorted by a small detachment of Egyptian troops, and guided by Arab sheikhs. *En route* they met the Guards Camel Corps under Colonel Sir William Cummings, and pushed forward to the point where the steamer *Nassif-el-Kheir* was waiting to convey them to Dongola.

On the 3rd November Wolseley arrived at Dongola, and was received by Sir Herbert Stewart, and the Mudir

or Governor. The native troops lined the avenue from the river bank to the Mudirieh, and a detachment from the Sussex regiment formed a guard of honour.

A firman from the Khedive to the Mudirs, the notables, and the people, was read, ordering them to obey Lord Wolseley, who had been sent to the Soudan to carry out such military operations as he might consider necessary.

His Lordship conferred on the Mudir the Order of the Second Class of St. Michael and St. George. It is said that the Mudir subsequently underwent a process of purification to rid himself from the contamination thus caused.

CHAPTER XIX.

PROGRESS TO KORTI.

Disquieting Rumours as to Gordon—His Position—Letters from him—Lord Wolseley's plans—Further News from Gordon—Prize offered to the Soldiers—The Naval Brigade and Lord Charles Beresford—Address to the Troops—The Advance from Dongola—Arrival at Korti—The Whalers—Choice of Routes—Lord Wolseley's Decision—The Desert Column—The Nile Column.

MEANWHILE disquieting rumours with regard to Gordon had reached Cairo, and Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed to Lord Wolseley on November 3rd, asking him whether he had any reason to believe that there was any foundation for the reports which had been current in Cairo for the last few days, that Khartoum had been taken, and that Gordon was a prisoner.

Lord Wolseley telegraphed from Dongola the same day to the following effect :—

'Major Kitchener telegraphs to Sir C. Wilson that he has seen a man named Ibrahim Wad-Beel who recently came from the Arabs some distance south. He said all was quiet, and when Gordon received our messenger, he fired a salute, and held a parade of troops. A second telegram from Major Kitchener, dated November 3, announces that Haji Abdallah had arrived, and stated that a man from Shendy reported that the Mahdi came with a strong force to Omdurman and asked General Gordon to surrender. General Gordon replied that he would hold Khartoum for twelve years.'

The information as to the position of Khartoum up to this date was as follows :—

On the 8th October, a letter had reached Cairo from M. Herbin, the French Consular Agent at Khartoum. It was as follows :—

'Khartoum, July 29, 1884.

'We are in a strong position at Khartoum. No need for alarm, unless it be the want of provisions (in two months our provisions will be exhausted). There is abundance of ammunition. The least assistance would enable us to relieve the town. If at the moment of eating our last biscuit we were to attempt to retire in a body northwards, the retreat could only be effected at the cost of immense exertions and dangers (the means of transport are wanting). Besides this, the people would rise to a man to pillage the convoy. A few determined men might attempt to escape southwards to the Equator, but it would be necessary to abandon most of our soldiers, and all the women and children. Gordon Pasha has decided that he will share the fate of the town, and I think it my duty to share that of the few Frenchmen shut up here. Except for unforeseen circumstances, you can even now foresee what will happen.'

On October the 31st Sir E. Baring had received a telegram stating that an Arab of the Kababish tribe had brought the news that the Mahdi's troops had attacked Gordon's force at Omdurman opposite Khartoum, a few days before, but the attack was repulsed. In a telegram dated Debbeh, November 2nd, a correspondent gave the following additional particulars :—

'Gordon attacked the rebels at Omdurman with a flotilla of twelve vessels, including steamers. For eight hours the engagement lasted. There were 25,000 of the rebels, and they had four Krupp guns. One burst. They retreated, leaving enormous numbers of dead behind them. The fugitives retired to Markeat, but were returning with an additional force. Obeid was taken by the powerful Takala tribes, who were mortal enemies of the Bagaras and the Mahdi. A Kababish merchant who has arrived from Omdurman, where he had been selling goods to the rebels, said, the Mahdi, with 40,000 to 50,000 men, is at Markeat, near Shatt. Food was scarce. A camel-load of dhura cost no less than thirty dollars. The Mahdi descended into a cave, and fasted for three days. He then returned and made proclamation that Allah had declared there would be peace for sixty days, and that afterwards blood would run like a river. Then, but not until then, there would be victory.'

On the 1st November, Sir E. Baring had received communications from Gordon to the effect that on the date they were sent off, viz., 13th July, Khartoum was 'all right and could hold out for four months.'

The next letters received from Gordon appear to have been the following. Though dated in August, they were not received till the 23rd November.

They were as follows :—

' General Gordon to Sir E. Baring.

' Khartoum, August 5, 1884.

'We are sending up steamers to Senaar, on Blue Nile, to open route. Arabs have left our vicinity in nearly all directions. When steamers come back we hope to recapture Berber by surprise, to place garrison in it, and Stewart and Power will descend Nile to Dongola and communicate with you. The garrison of Berber (to which I shall give provisions for three months) will be the Egyptian troops from this place; and I also shall make the foreign Consuls go down to Berber. I can look after security of Berber for two months, after which time I cannot be longer responsible for it, and you must relieve it from Dongola, or let the garrison perish and Berber be again taken by Arabs. You will dislike this arrangement, perhaps, but I have no option; and it would entail no risks to you, seeing that Berber will be held during your advance.

'All well here, and the troops elated at the result of their recent victories.

' C. G. GORDON.'

' General Gordon to the Senior Officer, Royal Navy, Massowah.

' Khartoum, August 26, 1884.

'In continuation of letter of the 24th August, 1884, in which I told you of our attack on Arabs which we meditated. We have (thank God!) succeeded in taking Arab camp and killing Arab Commander-in-Chief (R.I.P.). I do not know our losses as yet. This victory clears our vicinity on these parts of circle. The Arab defeat may be put down to the defection of a part of their forces who came over to us at the moment of attack. There is one bond of union between us and our troops; they know if the town is taken they will be sold as slaves, and we must not deny our Lord if we would save our lives. I think we hate the latter more than they hate the former. D.V. we will defeat them without any help from outside. Spies from Kordofan report advance of Mahdi with twenty-six guns towards Khartoum. I have always thought this is probable, and that the question will be solved here; but I trust he will not succeed, for we have made the place very strong; if he fails, he is done for.

' C. G. GORDON.'

Notwithstanding every effort to get the troops up the river as rapidly as possible, so many difficulties intervened that the task occupied much longer than had been anticipated. Early in November Wolseley telegraphed that, owing to steamers breaking down, difficult coaling, and scarcity of native labour, he did not expect to concentrate his force at Ambukol until the end of the year.

The necessity for pushing forward with all possible despatch, was made clear to Wolseley by a letter of much later date, received from Gordon on the 17th November, saying that he could hold out for forty days with ease, but that after that time it would be difficult. The letter was as follows :—

'Khartoum, 4th November, 1884.

'Post came in yesterday from Debbeh, Kitchener, dated 14th October, cypher letter from Lord Wolseley, 20th September last, which I cannot decipher, for Colonel Stewart took the cypher with him. No other communications have been received here since 31st, letter which arrived a week after Colonel Stewart's steamer left this.

'At Metammeh, waiting your orders, are five steamers with nine guns. We can hold out forty days with ease; after that it will be difficult. Terrible about loss of steamer. I sent Colonel Stewart, Power, and Herbin down, telling them to give you all information. With Colonel Stewart was the journal of all events from 1st March to the 10th September. The steamer carried a gun and had a good force on board.

'The Mahdi is here, about eight miles away. All north side along the White Nile is free of Arabs; they are on south and south-west and east of town some way off; they are quiet. Senaar is all right, and knows of your coming. With steamers are my journals from 10th September to date, with all details, and map of Berber.

'We have occasional fights with Arabs. Mahdi says he will not fight during this month, Moharram. With him are all the Europeans, nuns, &c.; rumoured all are become Mussulmans. Slatin is there; Lupton, Mahdi says, has surrendered.

'Since 10th March we have had up to date, exclusive of Kitchener's 14th October, only two despatches; one, Dongola, with no date; one from Souakin, 5th May; one of same import, 27th April. I have sent out a crowd of messengers in all directions during eight months. Get the newspapers to say I received letters through Kitchener from Sir S. Baker, my sister, Stanley, from Congo. Do not send any more private letters; it is too great a risk. Do not write in cypher, for I

have none, and it is of no import, for Mahdi knows everything and you need not fear him. I should take the road from Ambukol to Metammeh, where my steamers wait for you. Leontides, Greek Consul-General, Hanswell, Austrian Consul, all right. Stewart, Power, and Herbin, went down in the *Abbas*. A letter came from Mitzakis, the 31st July, from Adowa. The messenger had a letter from King for me, but Mahdi captured it. Please explain that to His Majesty. If journal is lost with Stewart we have no record of events from the 1st March to the 10th September, except the journal kept by doctor. Your expedition is for relief of garrison, which I failed to accomplish. I decline to agree that it is for me personally. Stewart's journal was a gem, illustrated with all the Arabic letters of Mahdi to me, &c. You may not know what has passed here. The Arabs camped outside Khartoum on the 12th March; we attacked them on the 16th March, got defeated and lost heavily, also a gun. We then from that date had continual skirmishes with Arabs. Stewart was wounded slightly in arm.

'On one occasion when river rose we drove off Arabs in three or four engagements, and fired their towns. Sent up to Senaar two expeditions; had another fight, and again was defeated with heavy loss; the square was always broken. This last defeat was on the 4th September; since then we have had comparative quiet. We fired 3,000,000 rounds. The Palace was the great place for the firing; Arabs have the Krupps here, and often have hulled our steamers. Arabs captured two small steamers at Berber, and one on Blue Nile. We have built two new ones, steamers. The steamers had bulwarks, and were struck with bullets 1090 times each on an average, and three times with shot each. We defended the lines with wire entanglements, and live shells as mines, which did great execution. We put lucifer matches to ignite them. The soldiers are only half a-month in arrears. We issue paper money, and also all the cloth in magazines. All the captives with the Mahdi are well. The nuns, to avoid an Arab marriage, are ostensibly married to Greeks. Slatin is with Mahdi, and has all his property, and is well treated; but I hear to-day he is in chains.

'A mysterious Frenchman* is with Mahdi, who came from Dongola. We have got a decoration made and distributed, with a grenade in the centre; three classes—gold, silver, pewter. Kitchener says he has sent letters and got none in reply. I have sent out during last month at least ten. Steamer with this leaves to-morrow for Metammeh. Do not let any Egyptian soldiers come up here; take command of steamers direct, and turn out Egyptian fellaheen. If capture of steamer with Stewart is corroborated, tell French Consul-General that Mahdi has the cypher he gave Herbin. Hassen Effendi, telegraph clerk, was with Stewart. You should send a party to the place to investigate affairs and take the steamer.'

* This was the notorious Oliver Pain.

On the 15th November, Lord Hartington telegraphed to Lord Wolseley to know how the information in Gordon's letter affected his plans. In reply the General, who had gone back to Wady Halfa, to hurry forward the expedition, stated that Gordon's letter made no change in his plans, but that it seemed to indicate the almost impossibility of Gordon's relief without fighting, adding that he, Wolseley, had sent Gordon the following message :—' Wady Halfa, November 17, 1884. Yours of 4th instant received 17th ; the first I have had from you. I shall be at Kasr Dongola in four days.'

A few days later an Arab merchant who arrived at Dongola from Khartoum *via* Shendy and Ambukol, and who had come by the desert route, stated that both water and fodder were plentiful. This news was confirmed by a messenger who returned to Dongola from Khartoum on the 19th November, and whose statement was thus telegraphed.

'Khartoum powerfully fortified and grain plentiful. Forty-two boats laden with grain arrived from Senaar. No scarcity about Shendy. Troops strongly entrenched at Omdurman ; also to the east at Kasr Rasikh Bey. Soldiers guarding corn crops on the Island of Tutti, which were nearly ripe. Mahdi's army encamped at Fineca, half-day's march from Khartoum. He is detested by his followers. The greater part of the Kordofan Arabs have deserted him ; five companies of regular troops gone over to the Government troops at Omdurman. Dysentery raging in Mahdi's camp ; mortality exceeds 100 a-day, and they are completely without grain. Messenger had heard that Saïd Morghani, with a large force, was on the Atbara ready to assist the Government.'

On the 28th a messenger sent by Gordon arrived at Dongola with a letter addressed to the Khedive, Nubar Pasha, and Baring, in cypher, and dated the 9th September. The letter begins :—

'There is money and provisions in Khartoum for four months, after which we shall be embarrassed. At Senaar also there is dhoora enough, and the Galabat garrison and neighbourhood continually fighting the inhabitants against the false Mahdi.

'Although we sent you message saying it was impossible to send Colonel Stewart to Berber on account of the many things that have occurred here, yet we afterwards saw fit to send him and the French and English Consuls in a small steamer to Dongola to communicate concerning the Soudan. We detailed two large steamers to accompany them to Berber, so as to engage the enemy by commanding them, and to keep the way clear for them to pass by Berber towards Dongola.

'How many times have we written asking for reinforcements, calling your serious attention to the Soudan? No answer at all has come to us as to what has been decided in the matter, and the hearts of men have become weary of this delay. While you are eating, drinking, and resting on good beds, we and those with us, both soldiers and servants, are watching by night and day, endeavouring to quell the movement of this false Mahdi. Of course you take no interest in suppressing this rebellion, the serious consequences of which are reverse of victorious for you, and the neglect thereof will not do.

'In two days' time Colonel Stewart, the Vice-Governor-General, and the two Consuls, will start from here to Berber, and thence to Dongola. The reason why I have now sent Colonel Stewart is because you have been silent all this while, and have neglected us, and lost time without doing any good. If troops were sent, as soon as they reach Berber this rebellion will cease, and the inhabitants will return to their former occupations. It is therefore hoped that you will listen to all that is told you by Stewart and the Consuls, and look at it seriously, and send troops as we have asked without any delay.'

A telegram from Gordon to Sir E. Baring and Nubar Pasha undated, but received the 29th November, gave the following details :—

'Seeing now that the Nile is high, and steamers can go as far as Berber, I have formed an expedition of 2000 men of the Khartoum garrison, which will proceed by steamers in order to rescue the Mudirieh of Berber from the hands of the rebels. After its recovery (D.V.) this force will remain at Berber with food for two months only, and if in that time the relieving army does not reach Berber in order to reinforce it, the Nile will have fallen and the islands will be dry, and the same result will ensue as before. Therefore it is to be hoped that the necessary troops will be sent to seize the Jezira of Berber while the Nile is high; and Stewart Pasha, Vice-Governor-General, is going down in the small steamer the *Abbas*, to proceed to Dongola by way of Berber, in order to communicate (with you) on the Soudan question, which is so important; and this I send you for your information.'

On the 29th November a messenger who had been

despatched with a letter to Gordon, but had been taken prisoner not far from Khartoum, and had subsequently made his escape came into camp. He reported that the Mahdi's troops were suffering from disease; food was very dear; the Arabs were deserting, but the Kordofan men were faithful to him. Gordon sent to the Mahdi inviting him, if he were the real Mahdi, to dry up the Nile and cross over. Five hundred regulars recently went over to Gordon; the regulars still with the Mahdi were discontented. On 14th he saw an attack made on Khartoum between the Blue and White Niles; it was repulsed, and the Mahdi, who was looking on, was very angry because it had been made without his orders.

Aware that time was of paramount importance, Wolseley, in order to stimulate his men to exertion, offered a prize of 100*l.* to the battalion which should make the quickest passage from Sarras to Debbeh, twenty miles further up the river, a measure which was much criticised by a portion of the British Press.*

Wolseley now gave orders for the formation of a naval brigade, to be commanded by Lord Charles Beresford, his naval aide-de-camp.†

Wolseley also issued the following address:—

‘To the Sailors, Soldiers, and Marines of the Nile Expedition.—The relief of General Gordon and his garrison, so long besieged in Khartoum, is the glorious mission which the Queen has entrusted to us.

‘It is an enterprise that will stir the heart of every soldier and sailor fortunate enough to have been selected to share in it, and the very magnitude of its difficulty only stimulates us to increased exertions.

* The prize after a keen competition was won by the Royal Irish Regiment, the Royal Highlanders coming in second, and the West Kent third.

† The appointment of Lord Charles Beresford was perhaps justly regarded as a piece of favouritism. Commander Hammill, who had for months been engaged in the preliminary work on the Nile, and whose services in passing the steamers through the cataracts have been already referred to, was passed over.

'We are all proud of General Gordon and his gallant and self-sacrificing defence of Khartoum, which has added, if possible, to his already high reputation. He cannot hold out many months longer, and he now calls upon us to save his garrison. His heroism and his patriotism are household words wherever our language is spoken; and not only has his safety become a matter of national importance, but the knowledge that our brave comrade needs help, urges us to push forward with redoubled energy. Neither he nor his garrison can be allowed to meet the sad fate which befell his gallant companion-in-arms, Colonel Stewart, who, when endeavouring to carry out an enterprise of unusual danger, was foully and treacherously murdered by his captors.

'We can—and with God's help will—save General Gordon from such a death. The labour of working up this river is immense, and to bear it uncomplainingly demands the highest soldier-like qualities, that contempt for danger, and that determination to overcome difficulty, which in previous campaigns have so distinguished all ranks of Her Majesty's army and navy. The physical obstacles that impede our rapid progress are considerable, but who cares for them when it is remembered that General Gordon and his garrison are in danger? Under God their safety is now in our hands, and come what may, we must save them. It is needless to say more to British soldiers and sailors.

'WOLSELEY.'

On the 23rd November some cases of smallpox having occurred at Dongola, Sir Herbert Stewart started to select another camping-ground at Debbah, where a dépôt was established. All the remaining troops destined to take part in the expedition reached Wady Halfa by the end of November, with the exception of the 1st battalion of the Cameron Highlanders which remained at Korosko.

The advance in force from Dongola commenced on the 2nd December, from which date the troops as they arrived, were moved on beyond Debbah to Ambukol, where a dépôt for supplies had been formed and placed in charge of Stewart. The head-quarters were established at the latter place on the 12th December.

From Ambukol the force was moved a few miles further up the river to Korti, a much healthier spot.

Sir Herbert Stewart with the Mounted Infantry

and Guards' Camel Corps, reached Korti on the 15th December, after a march along the east bank of the Nile.

Wolseley's arrival at Korti on the 16th was followed by that of the South Staffordshire regiment. The last companies of the South Staffordshire with part of the Sussex regiment reached the front on the 22nd, and these were speedily followed by other detachments. The Light Camel Corps, under Colonel M'Calmont, arrived on the 24th, after a twenty days' march from Wady Halfa; and at the same time, the Heavy Camel Corps came up from Debbeh. General Buller, the Chief of the Staff, reached the front soon afterwards.

Of the Nile journey Wolseley reported to Lord Hartington, 'The English boats have up to this point fulfilled all my expectations. The men are in excellent health, fit for any trial of strength, as the result of constant manual labour.'

As a commentary on the above, it may be mentioned that nine out of sixteen boats which brought up some of the Duke of Cornwall's regiment were lost, and the remainder, owing to the slightness of their build, had to be patched with tin to prevent their sinking—over fifty boats in all were lost. There can be no doubt as to the 'constant manual labour' mentioned by Lord Wolseley. The men arrived in a deplorable plight, many of them without either boots or trousers. A more ragged set of soldiers never arrived at the seat of war. According to one account 'there was literally not a sound garment in the whole column, and the men resembled Falstaff's ragged regiment rather than a body of British troops.'

By Christmas Day, a great part of the Expeditionary Force was concentrated at Korti.*

* The last whaler with troops did not arrive till 7th February, 1885.

Referring to the delay in the advance which eventually led to the failure of the expedition, Wolseley, in a despatch to Lord Hartington, expresses himself as follows :—

‘It has been to me a source of heartfelt regret that I was not able to reach this place at an earlier date. My advance has been delayed through the difficulty of collecting supplies at this point, 1400 miles by river from the sea, in sufficient quantities to warrant an advance into the neighbourhood of a besieged garrison that is very short of food, where all the surrounding districts have been laid waste, and where even the besieging army finds it difficult to subsist.’

It now became necessary to decide upon the route to be adopted by the Expeditionary Force in order to reach Khartoum. The one important question to consider was that of time; already the journey of the expedition up the river had taken much longer than was expected. The season during which military operations could be carried on was limited, and if, as had been intended the expedition was to return before the hot weather there was not a day to spare. Moreover, Gordon's latest communications showed that he was rapidly running short of provisions, and if not speedily relieved Khartoum must fall.

As a military operation, the route by the Nile offered many advantages, and had time permitted there is no doubt that Wolseley's whole force would have gone that way. But the distance to be traversed requiring months for its accomplishment, rendered it imperative to adopt some other expedient if Gordon was to be relieved at all. Under these circumstances, it was determined to divide the Expeditionary Force into two columns, one to proceed across the desert to Metammeh, a distance of 185 miles, and thence to Khartoum, and the other to proceed by the river up the Nile Valley.

Shortly stated, Wolseley's plans for the campaign were as follows :—

1st. By despatching a column across the desert to Metammeh to secure the shortest passage to Khartoum, and at the same time to hold the wells at Gakdul and Abu-Klea, and to hold Metammeh whilst communications were maintained with Gordon.

2nd. By despatching a second column along the Nile Valley to disperse the rebels around Hamdab, fifty-two miles distant from Korti, to punish the Monassir tribes for the murder of Colonel Stewart, to leave Berti in safety, to rid Abu Hamid of the enemy, and to open up the desert route from thence to Korosko, whence stores and ammunition for an attack on Berber would be forwarded. Thus covering a great bend of the Nile, the column would operate on Berber, dislodge the rebels there, and join hands with the other column on the banks of the Nile at Metammeh.

In a letter to the Secretary at War, Wolseley gives the reasons for adopting the above plan of operations in the following words :—

‘I had always thought it possible that upon arrival here I might find it necessary to operate beyond this point in two columns—one continuing up the river in our English-built boats, while the other pushed rapidly across the desert to Metammeh, and it was with the view of securing to myself the power of moving across this desert that I proposed the formation of a Camel Brigade.

‘Any march across this desert with a small column, as an isolated operation, would be hazardous, and for the purpose of my mission a most useless undertaking. Such a column would most probably be able to fight its way into Khartoum; possibly it might fight its way out again; but it could never bring away General Gordon and his garrison in safety. Undertaken, however, under present circumstances, the march of a small force across this desert presents a very different aspect. The so-called Mahdi and his supporters are well aware that they have to deal not only with it, but also with the English Army,

which they know is advancing up the Nile on Khartoum by Abu Hamid and Berber. Upon arrival here I had to decide whether I should keep all my force together and follow the Nile Valley to Khartoum, or to divide it into two columns—one following the river, while the other was pushed rapidly across to Metammeh.

‘If I were not restricted by time, the first course would be by far the most satisfactory, the safest, and would ensure the best results; but I know that General Gordon is pressed by want of food, and the hot season is not far off, when military operations in this country are trying to the health of European soldiers. I therefore decided upon the last-mentioned course.’

The first, or Desert Column, was placed under the command of Sir Herbert Stewart, and consisted of men mainly belonging to different sections of the Camel Corps; a company of the Royal Engineers, part of the 19th Hussars, and detachments of the Commissariat and Medical Corps. Seven hundred and fifty gallons of water were to be taken as a reserve, together with 40,000 cartridges, and each mounted man was to carry seven days’ rations, seven gallons of water, and 150 rounds of ammunition.

The force was to be accompanied by 2000 camels for the purposes of transport. Sir Charles Wilson was to proceed with Stewart, and to the former was allotted the task of opening up communication with Gordon when once the Nile should be struck at Metammeh.

Lord Charles Beresford and a small body of seamen were told off to accompany the force, to take possession of any of Gordon’s steamers which might be found at Metammeh. A detachment of Infantry was to proceed to Khartoum by the steamers, and Sir Charles Wilson was empowered on entering Khartoum to march his men through the city to show the people that British troops were at hand, but he was directed only to stay long enough to confer with Gordon.

The Nile column was placed under Major General Earle, and consisted of the Staffordshire and Duke of Cornwall's regiments, the Black Watch, the Gordon Highlanders, a squadron of the 19th Hussars, a battery of Egyptian Artillery, an Egyptian Camel Corps, and the auxiliary native troops of the Mudir of Dongola. The whole, with transport, numbering about 3000 men.

CHAPTER XX.

STEWART'S DESERT MARCH.

Departure for Gakdul—The Wells—Intelligence from Gordon—Bivouac near Abu Klea.

ON December 30th part of Stewart's force, consisting of 73 officers, 1032 non-commissioned officers and men, 140 camel-drivers, 2099 camels, and forty horses, started on the march across the desert to Gakdul.

The baggage-camels were arranged in columns, with from twenty to thirty marching abreast, and with fifty yards interval between each troop. The Guards in front and the Mounted Infantry in the rear were in close companies ready to dismount and form square at a moment's notice. Wolseley inspected the whole, and at a quarter to three the cavalry scouts, under Major Kitchener with some Arab guides, moved off in front.

A quarter of an hour later the great column got in motion, striking straight off across the undulating and pebbly plain towards the distant horizon. It was a strange sight to see the camels with their necks stretching out like ostriches, and their long legs moving off in military array until the rising dust first blended desert, men, and camels in one uniform grey hue, and finally hid them from the sight of those who remained in camp. Scared gazelles rose from among the rocks and bounded away across the desert, from time to time, as the force advanced. Broad as was the face on which this column marched, it extended fully a mile in length. The first halt was made at five p.m.

with a view to ascertaining the whereabouts of the Hussars who had gone on in the morning to collect wood and light fires at the first halting-place. After some time it was discovered that they had taken the wrong route, and it was not till midnight that they joined the column. The halt lasted for an hour and a half. General Stewart then gave orders for the column to close up, and for the camels to proceed on a broader front.

When they moved on again in the bright moonlight, the length of the column was reduced to half-a-mile, and was not only under better control on the line of march, but more able to resist any sudden attack.

The march continued until half-past seven on the 31st, when a long halt was called, and the camels were unloaded. There was some excitement among the men when they halted for their first bivouac, owing to the uncertainty as to the whereabouts and disposition of the inhabitants. Only a few huts were visible, and these were deserted. Plenty of green fodder was obtainable and the troops remained on the spot undisturbed until three in the afternoon, when a fresh start was made.

The force now marched through a beautiful country, great spreading plains covered with mimosa and scrub succeeded one another, bounded by black rocky mountains, through the gorges of which the troops passed only to emerge on fresh tracts of the same character. The formation observed almost throughout the march was columns of companies, and the force was so distributed that in two minutes three squares could be formed in *échelon* to resist any attack.

At a quarter-past five the column again halted, and then, with a bright moon, resumed its way, passing the wells of Hambok, where only a small supply of water was found, at half-past eight p.m.

Just after one a.m. on the 1st January, 1885, a halt was made at the wells of El Howeyah. At 8.30 the march was resumed till one p.m., when a halt was made during the heat of the day.

Thus far the column had met neither friends nor foes, but just before this halt the capture was made of a man and his family, who were watching their flocks. The man, who turned out to be a noted robber-chief, was thenceforth made use of as a guide.

At half-past three p.m. the column marched again until dark at seven, then, waiting until the moon rose, resumed its way at half-past eight. Without any further halt the column continued its march throughout the night. During the night one or two prisoners were taken ; one of them being an Arab from Metammeh, who gave important information.

At four a.m. on the 2nd the force was opposite the wells of Abou Halfa, three miles from the main track. A company of Mounted Infantry was sent off to seize the wells. This was effected, only a few natives being seen, and these fled at the approach of the troops.

At half-past seven, the mouth of the gorge leading to Gakdul wells, distant 95 miles from Korti, was reached. The column had occupied forty-six hours and fifty minutes on the march, and been thirty-two and three-quarter hours actually on the move. There had been no casualties on the road, and the men, although they had remained almost without sleep since leaving Korti, were in the best of spirits.

The wells at Gakdul proved to be three in number, situated at the north end of a large circular plain or natural amphitheatre, surrounded by steep rocks some 300 feet in height. The day was occupied in watering the camels. At eight p.m. Sir Herbert Stewart, with all the camels and the whole force except the Guards and

Engineers, about 400 in number altogether, started on the return journey to Korti.

The force left at the wells set to work under Major Dorward of the Royal Engineers, to construct three forts on the high ground, and made improvements in the arrangements for watering and in the means of access to the wells. Major Kitchener's Mounted Infantry captured a convoy of camels laden with dates for the Mahdi. The appearance of natives in the neighbourhood was reported, but otherwise the little party at the wells met with no excitement. On the 11th a convoy of stores and ammunition, under Colonel Clarke, arrived at the wells from Korti.

Stewart and the column which accompanied him back from Gakdul returned to Korti on Jan. 5. Lord Wolseley rode out to meet the column, and complimented the General on his achievement.

The prisoners taken stated that Metammeh was occupied in strength by the Mahdi's army. Some put the force there at two thousand men, others said that there were five thousand. The enemy had thrown up an entrenchment, and were prepared to receive an attack.

In the interval between General Stewart's departure from and return to Korti, Lord Wolseley (on 30th December) had received from a messenger from Khartoum a communication from Gordon, showing the desperate condition of things there.

The messenger brought a piece of paper the size of a postage-stamp, on which was written :—

‘Khartoum all right.

‘(Signed) C. G. GORDON.

‘December 14th, 1884.’

It was genuine, as Gordon's writing was recognised, and his seal was on the back of it.

Gordon told the messenger to give Lord Wolseley the following message :—

'We are besieged on three sides, Omdurman, Halfiyeh and Hoggi-Ali. Fighting goes on day and night. Enemy cannot take us, except by starving us out. Do not scatter your troops. Enemy are numerous. Bring plenty of troops if you can. We still hold Omdurman on the left bank and the fort on the right bank. The Mahdi's people have thrown up earthworks within rifle-shot of Omdurman. The Mahdi lives out of gun-shot. About four weeks ago the Mahdi's people attacked Omdurman and disabled one steamer. We disabled one of the Mahdi's guns. Three days after fighting was renewed on the south, and the rebels were again driven back.

'(Secret and Confidential.)—Our troops in Khartoum are suffering from lack of provisions. Food we still have is little; some grain and biscuit. We want you to come quickly. You should come by Metam-meh or Berber. Make by these two roads. Do not leave Berber in your rear. Keep enemy in your front, and when you have taken Berber send me word from Berber. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad. In Khartoum there are no butter nor dates, and little meat. All food is very dear.'

It is clear that the words 'Khartoum all right' were simply intended to deceive in the event of the written communication getting into the wrong hands. This became evident later on from a letter which Gordon wrote to a friend in Cairo at the same date as he penned the words 'Khartoum all right,' but which did not arrive till the month of February. 'All is up,' he said; 'I expect a catastrophe in ten days' time. It would not have been so if our people had kept me better informed as to their intentions. My adieux to all. C. G. GORDON.'

The latter part of the verbal message is significant, and seems to imply that Gordon anticipated that if the approach of the troops were to become known, the treachery which he had all along anticipated would be accelerated.

It is scarcely necessary to say that only the written portion of Gordon's communication, viz., 'Khartoum all right,' was disclosed to the public, who thus formed a very erroneous opinion as to his real position.

It does not appear that Wolseley's plans received any change upon receipt of Gordon's message. There was, in fact, nothing left but to push on with all possible speed.

On the 8th January Stewart, having strengthened his column, again set out for Gakdul.

On the 10th, the column reached the Hambok wells, whence Stewart pushed forward to Howeiyah. On arriving there at ten a.m. it was found that the Engineers and Mounted Infantry, who had been left behind on the previous journey, had sunk several holes to a depth of nine feet or so in the rough gravel soil near a dry watercourse, and that some of these holes contained about six inches of cold opal-coloured water with a chalybeate taste. Unfortunately the holes in question had been practically drained a couple of hours before by the men of the previous convoy ; so that Stewart's troops had to content themselves with a quart per head for the entire day.

Resuming their forward march they reached a grassy plain to the south of the Galif range shortly after sunset, and here they bivouacked until three a.m. on the following morning. A fresh start was then made, but the heat and excessive thirst were beginning to tell both on men and camels, thirty of the latter dropping dead on the road. However, the column persevered in its course, and the wells of Abu Halfa were reached at three in the afternoon. Pannikins, canteens, water-bottles, and horse-buckets, were soon at work, the men taking their turn until their thirst was quenched.

On the 12th the column was astir, and at eleven o'clock it defiled along a rocky gorge into the crater-like amphitheatre where the Gakdul reservoirs were situated. Here was found the force left to guard the wells when Stewart had returned to Korti. It was ascertained

that more wells were to be found across the hills at a distance of a mile or two, but the three natural receptacles at Gakdul itself were computed to contain among them nearly half-a-million gallons of water, so that for military purposes the supply was regarded as practically inexhaustible.

Colonel Burnaby arrived at Gakdul on the 13th with a convoy of grain. At two p.m. the following day, the march towards Abu Klea was resumed, Major Kitchener going back to Korti, and Colonel Vandeleur being left with 400 of the Sussex Regiment at Gakdul to hold that station, whilst the Guards who had previously protected the wells joined the column. The force was composed as follows—Three troops 19th Hussars; 1st Division Naval Brigade, one Gardner gun; half battery Royal Artillery, *i.e.*, three (7-pounder) screw-guns; Heavy Camel Regiment; Guards Camel Regiment; Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment; Sussex Regiment; Naval Brigade Royal Engineers; Transport and Medical Corps; in all about 1800 men and 2880 camels, and 340 drivers.

Beyond Gakdul, the road led across a more barren region than that which had been previously traversed. Only ten miles were covered on the afternoon of the 14th.

The following day the column was again on the move at five a.m. At half-past nine, when opposite Gebel-el-Nil, a well-known mountain in the desert, a halt was made to allow of the stragglers coming up. The march was now telling severely on the heavily laden camels, which had been for several days on half allowance of forage. Numbers of them fell through sheer exhaustion, and had to be shot to put them out of their misery or to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. At noon the march was resumed until five in the evening when, after going twenty-four miles since the morning, the column halted near another mountain, Gebel Serghain.

On the 16th the column started at five in the morning. It was then too dark to see anything, and the force got into some confusion. This, however, was soon rectified on daylight appearing. At half-past eleven a halt was called for breakfast.

Whilst halted a report was received from Lieutenant-Colonel Barrow, of the 19th Hussars, who had been sent forward with his squadron to reconnoitre the neighbourhood of the Abu Klea Wells, stating that he had seen about fifty of the enemy standing in groups on the hills about four miles north-east of Abu Klea. Shortly after the whole force was advanced. The ground now traversed was a vast flat plain favourable for military evolutions, and the Guards Camel Regiment, the Heavy Camel Regiment, and the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment moved in a broad front in line of columns at half distance. Before the column rose steep black mountains through which it had to pass, and in the centre at a point where the ground slopes towards the Nile, were the wells of Abu Klea.

It soon became evident that the enemy was in force, and looking to the hour (two p.m.) Stewart deemed it undesirable to attempt an attack that day. The column therefore was ordered to bivouac when about three miles from Abu Klea.

Abu Klea is an elevated spot in the desert, about 300 feet above the level of the Nile, on the caravan track, from Gakdul distant about forty-three miles, and from Metammeh twenty-three miles.

On the troops bivouacking for the night the men were set to work cutting down the brushwood, and forming a zeriba round the baggage and camels. A stone breastwork with a frontage of about 150 yards was thrown up as an additional protection some 100 yards further to the front. Pickets were also placed on the hills to the left of the position.

From an advanced position occupied by the outposts the enemy's camp was sighted across a pass about two miles ahead, and in front of it a long line of flags marked the position. Meanwhile two groups of the enemy were watching the movements of the British force from the hills on the left front.

Towards six o'clock the enemy fired a few stray shots on the British right flank, to which Captain Gilbert Norton, R.A., replied with some rounds from three of the screw-guns.

The enemy continued firing at intervals all night with no results beyond one slight casualty.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

General Stewart's Despatch—Details of the Fight at Abu Klea—The Zeriba—The square attacked—Death of Colonel Burnaby—The Enemy repulsed—Particulars of the Enemy's Forces engaged—Their Losses—The British Losses—The Wells occupied—The Bivouac.

A GENERAL attack on the column was expected at daybreak on the 17th January, and the men were three times called to arms.

The skirmishers engaged at dawn, when the enemy began to advance on the right and front, moving along the ridges in two lines with drums beating and banners waving. Breakfast was served out to the troops, and at nine o'clock orders were given to form square preparatory to an advance. The action which ensued is thus described in Sir Herbert Stewart's despatch :—

' Upon the 17th instant it was plain that the enemy were in force. During the night they had constructed works on our right flank, from which a distant but well-aimed fire was maintained. In our front the manœuvring of their troops in line and in column was apparent, and everything pointed to the probability of an attack upon our position being made. Under these circumstances, no particular hurry to advance was made, in the hope that our apparent dilatoriness might induce the enemy to push home. The camp having been suitably strengthened to admit of its being held by a comparatively small garrison, viz., forty Mounted Infantry, 125 Sussex and details, and the enemy still hesitating to attack, an advance was made to seize the Abu Klea wells.

' The force moved on foot in a square, which was formed as follows :—left front face, two companies Mounted Infantry ; right front face, two companies Guards, with the three guns Royal Artillery in the centre. Left face, two companies Mounted Infantry, one company

Heavy Camel regiment. Right face, two companies Guards, detachment Royal Sussex. Rear face, four companies Heavy Camel regiment, with Naval Brigade and one Gardner gun in the centre.

The advance at once attracted a fairly aimed fire from the enemy in front, and on both flanks, which, in order to enable the square to continue moving, it was absolutely necessary to hold in check by the fire of skirmishers.

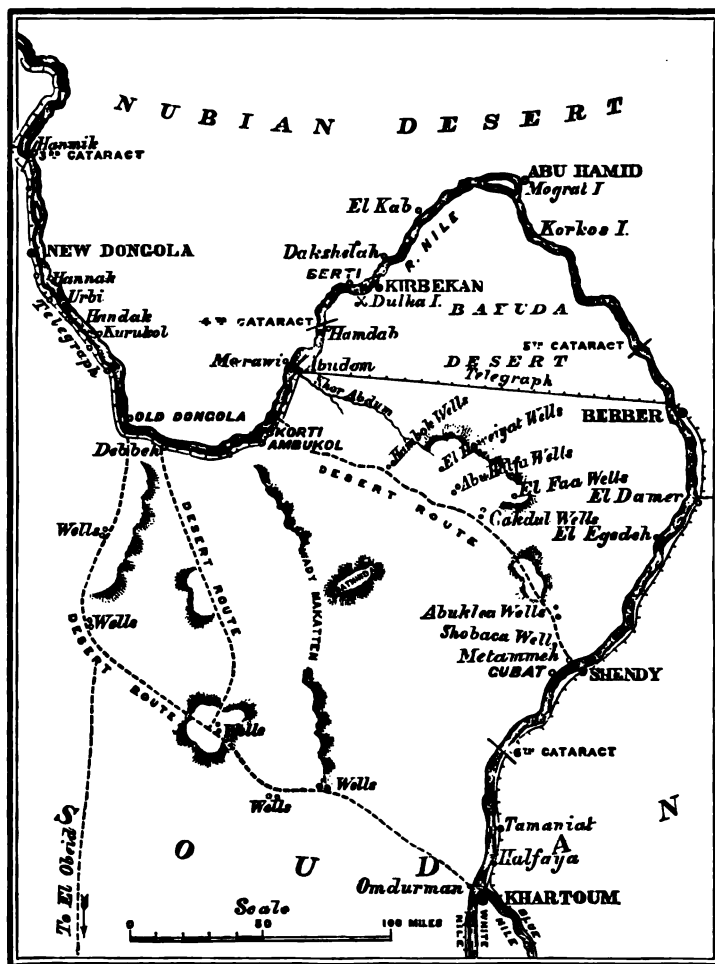
'The enemy's main position was soon apparent, and by passing that position well clear of its left flank, it was manifest that he must attack or be enfiladed. As the square was nearly abreast of the position, the enemy delivered his attack in the shape of a singularly well-organized charge, commencing with a wheel to the left. A withering fire was at once brought to bear upon the enemy, especially from the more advanced portion of the left front face of the square. The rear portion of this face taking a moment or two to close up, was not in such a favourable position to receive the enemy's attack, and I regret to say that the square was penetrated at this point by the sheer weight of the enemy's numbers.

'The steadiness of the troops enabled the hand-to-hand conflict to be maintained, whilst severe punishment was still being meted out to those of the enemy continuing to advance, with the result that a general retreat of the enemy under a heavy artillery and rifle-fire soon took place.

'After reforming the square, the 19th Hussars, who had been acting in difficult ground, supporting our left flank, were pushed on to seize the Abu Klea wells, and at five p.m. those wells were completely in our possession. Detachments of the corps then returned to the bivouac of the 16th instant to bring up the camels and *impedimenta* left there, thus completing the force here this morning at eight a.m.

'The strength of the enemy is variously estimated from 8000 to 14,000 men. My opinion is that not less than 2000 of the enemy operated on our right flank, 3000 in the main attack, and 5000 in various other positions; but it is difficult to estimate their numbers with any exactness. Their losses have been very heavy; not less than 800 lay dead on the open ground flanking our square, and their wounded during the entire day's fighting are reported by themselves as quite exceptional. Many are submitting. Tents have been pitched, and a strong post established over the wells, garrisoned by a detachment of the Sussex regiment.'

To the General's report a few details may be added. It should be stated that after various experiments all idea of fighting on the camels had been abandoned, and that in the operations of the column at this time and



subsequently the camels were simply used for purposes of locomotion. This being so, the terms 'Camel Corps' and 'Mounted Infantry,' when used must in most cases be understood as meaning *dismounted* troops belonging to those corps respectively.

With the exception of the guard left at the zeriba, the Hussars, and a few of the Mounted Infantry, the whole force was formed into a single square which advanced on foot towards the wells. Water and ammunition were carried by camels posted in the centre.

The position of the various regiments is described in the despatch. It will be noticed that each face of the square, except the rear, was composed of a composite force, the object being, probably, to provide against a break of corps at the angles. Thus, the Guards held the right forward angle and the Mounted Infantry the left. The Heavy Camel Regiment held the rear face and the left rear angle. The Sussex Regiment closed the gap in the right rear face between the Guards and the Heavy Camel Regiment. Thus, there was a break of corps only at the right rear angle.

A square formation is unsuited for movement, and after the advance was ordered, as stated in Stewart's despatch, the men moved forward at a slow march, keeping always on open rocky ground so as to avoid spots where the enemy could hide and collect unseen.

For some time they had been apparently unwilling to deliver an attack, and this indecision lasted as long as the troops remained in the zeriba. These tactics seem to have been partially abandoned as soon as the column was put in motion, and it then became exposed to a brisk fire.

It was at eleven o'clock that the square brought its left face opposite the left flank of the enemy's position, and it became necessary for him to attack or be enfiladed.

The hills on each side were swarming with riflemen and spearmen.

When about 1500 yards from the line of flags marking the enemy's position, the guns fired four or five shells amongst them, and hundreds of the men were seen to rise up and bolt, leaving their standards only visible. Then on a sudden came the enemy's attack. A large body, said to be about 5000 in number, reappeared and wildly charged the left front corner of the square with precisely the same headlong speed and reckless devotion which were shown at Tamaai. As in Graham's campaign, the enemy's idea seems to have been to carry the British square with a rush, trusting simply to the weight of numbers. The first intimation of the impending charge was the running in at full speed of the skirmishers. These were followed by a black mass of Arabs, who rising suddenly out of cover when the troops were at a distance of 450 yards from the flags, made straight for the square. Their shouts as they ran were described by an eye-witness as being like the roar of the sea. When, banners in hand, they neared the square, they were received with such a deadly fire from the (dismounted) Mounted Infantry that they swerved round the left flank and made a furious onslaught on the left rear of the square, where the Heavy Camel Regiment was stationed.

The rush was so sudden that the skirmishers had barely time to reach the square before the enemy fell upon the Heavy Camel Corps,* who, to avoid killing their own men, were for some minutes compelled to reserve their fire. With such impetuosity was the charge made

* There was surely something anomalous in placing heavy cavalry in an infantry square, a formation altogether contrary to the spirit of their training and traditions. The behaviour of the force in the wild *mêlée* which ensued, and the steadiness which enabled the square to be reformed under circumstances which rendered disaster possible, were worthy of the finest traditions of the British Army.

that the Heavy Camel Corps were borne back, and the square forced by the sheer weight of numbers.

Frantic shouts to the Guards to stand firm were heard. Both officers and men still faced the enemy, although the line of the Heavies was bent into an irregular semicircle extending into the square as far as the kneeling camels in the rear. These camels formed a useful breastwork beyond which the assailants could not penetrate, and over and around the animals the fight raged, both parties fighting hand to hand, bayonet against spear.

The Gardner gun at the angle was jammed and useless, after firing two or three rounds. For ten minutes a desperate struggle extended from the left rear to the centre. It was at this period that Colonel Burnaby fell, a spear having severed his jugular vein, but not until he had killed with his own hands more than one of his assailants. Stewart's horse, by sheer weight of numbers, was thrown off his legs and then speared, and his orderly was killed beside him. The General's life was only saved by the coolness and presence of mind of Sir Charles Wilson, who was standing next to him. A few of the enemy had crawled in between the camels, and one man who had succeeded in doing this was with spear in hand making for the General. Sir Charles Wilson observed the move, whipped out his revolver, shot the man dead, and with an apologetic smile returned the revolver to his belt.

Many of the camels were speared by the assailants, and the interior of the square formed a mass of falling camels and struggling combatants, half hidden mid dust and smoke. The issue could not, however, be said to have been a moment in doubt, for the Heavy Camel Corps were soon supported by soldiers from the other sides of the square. These were in readiness to oppose any further advance had the line given way, though

they were obliged to withhold their fire so long as the two parties were mingled in the strife. Later on they faced about and fired into the square killing no doubt both friends and foes.

It was not long before every Arab who had entered the square was killed, the rest beaten back, and amid three hearty cheers the square re-formed on fresh ground away from the killed and wounded.

It was now half-past three, and as the enemy moved off the guns opened on them with grape at 500 yards range, and quickened their retreat.* They withdrew in a slow, sullen way, turning round from time to time as if anxious to come on again. Eventually the last of them disappeared over the sand-hills.

The force opposed to Stewart was stated by the prisoners taken, to consist of ten tribes of about 800 men each. According to the report of the Intelligence Department, their numbers were still greater and were made up as follows :—2000 Ababdeh, Bisharin, and other Arabs from Berber, 60 soldiers of the Old Egyptian army from Berber ; 2000 Arabs and others from Metammeh ; 1000 men of the Mahdi's army (400 armed with rifles), and 4000 to 6000 of Arabs of various tribes from Kordofan.

The rifles with which some of the enemy were armed were all of the Remington pattern, and formed part of the arms captured from Hicks Pasha's army. The rest of the enemy carried the heavy Soudan sword or a long spear, supplemented in most cases by a shield of tough hide. The Berber force, which had a contingent of 250 horse-men, retreated towards Berber after the action.

* Norton's battery did immense service, especially when the rebel cavalry formed for the charge, three shrapnels going in their midst ; and again when a renewed attack was threatened from the enemy's left. The shells caused utter demoralization. Altogether the battery fired thirty-eight shrapnels, nineteen common shell, and six case, the latter when the rebels rushed to close quarters.

The enemy fought with the most reckless courage and absolute disregard of death.

The troops on the right attack were led by Abu Saleh, Emir of Metammeh. On the left they were under Mahommed Khair, Emir of Berber. The latter was wounded, and retired early ; but Saleh came desperately on at the head of a hundred fanatics, escaping the withering fire of the Martinis marvellously, until shot down in the square.

The loss of the enemy was not less than 1200 killed and wounded, 1100 bodies being counted on the spot where the square had been. The slaughter would have been greater still had the square been able to open fire as soon as the charge commenced, instead of having to wait till the skirmishers had run in. But for this, in spite of their bravery, but comparatively few of the assailants would have succeeded in coming to close quarters.

The British loss, viz., nine officers and 65 non-commissioned officers and men killed, and 85 wounded, was very heavy for a force whose total number was only 1800 men. The following is the list of officers killed and wounded :—

Officers killed.—Colonel Burnaby, Royal Horse Guards ; Major Carmichael, 5th Lancers ; Major Ather-ton, 5th Dragoon Guards ; Major Gough, Royal Dragoons ; Captain Darley, 4th Dragoon Guards ; Lieutenant Law, 4th Dragoon Guards ; Lieutenant Wolfe, Scots Greys ; Lieutenants Pigott and Delisle, Naval Brigade. Severely wounded.—Lord St. Vincent,* Major Dickson, Royals ; Lieutenants Lyall and Guthrie, Artillery ; Surgeon Magill. Slightly wounded.—Lord Airlie, Lieutenant Beech, Life Guards ; Costello, 5th Lancers ; Major Gough, Mounted Infantry.

The greatest loss on Stewart's side fell on the Heavy Cavalry Camel Corps, of whose officers six

* Afterwards died of his wounds.

were killed and two wounded. The first thing that strikes one is the extraordinary disproportion of killed and wounded officers as compared with the non-commissioned officers and privates. Such a return tells its own tale, and speaks volumes for the self-sacrificing devotion of those in command.

The seizure of the Abu Klea wells was a matter of paramount importance, and the detachment of the 19th Hussars, which had come up too late to strike at the retreating foe, was pushed forward to perform this service. This they were able to accomplish without resistance, a fact which goes far to prove the demoralisation of the enemy. The Hussars, as stated in Stewart's report, took possession of the wells at five p.m. They then sent back filled water-skins to the zeriba, for their comrades there. Jaded as the rest of the men were by marching, by night alarms, by a fierce heat, and an encounter with an enemy seven times their number, they reached the wells soon after.

The water was found plentiful, and though of a muddy yellow colour, fit for drinking purposes. At eight at night a portion of the Guards, with some of the Heavy Camel Corps and Mounted Infantry, were sent back to fetch the occupants of the zeriba in the rear. The force then bivouacked on the ground near the wells without tents, provisions, or baggage. The night was piercingly cold, and the men had to get between the camels, and cover themselves with the baggage nets for warmth and shelter.

On the morning of the 18th, the party despatched to the zeriba returned, and the whole column, including camels and baggage, was now concentrated at the wells. On the arrival of the zeriba detachment with stores and provisions, the force partook of its first meal since the morning of the previous day.

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM ABU KLEA TO METAMMEH.

Sir Charles Wilson's Despatch—The March to Metammeh—General Stewart wounded—Sir Charles Wilson takes the Command—The Square leaves the Zeriba for the Nile—The Square attacked—The River reached—The Party left in the Zeriba—Losses of the Enemy—The British Losses—Occupation of Gubat—Reconnaissance to Metammeh—Arrival of Gordon's Steamers—Gubat fortified.

THE further movements of the column up to the time of its arrival on the Nile, are related in a despatch from Sir Charles Wilson, which runs as follows :—

' Camp, near Metammeh, January 22nd, 1885.

' The column under Brigadier-General Sir Herbert Stewart left the wells of Abu Klea at about 3.30 p.m. on the 18th. After passing the wells of Shobaca the column moved to its right, as it was Sir H. Stewart's intention to turn Metammeh, and attack it from the south.

' The column which had been halted for a short time before daylight, marched, at dawn, for the Nile, which was at that time about six miles distant. At about 7 a.m. on 19th, when between three or four miles from the river, the enemy showed in considerable force on the left flank, and were noticed working round our front to intercept our march to the Nile.

' Sir H. Stewart at once halted and formed square round the camels. At 8 a.m. the enemy's sharpshooters commenced a well-sustained fire on the square, and Sir H. Stewart directed the formation of a zeriba of camel-saddles and boxes to protect the men.

' At 10.15 a.m., Sir H. Stewart having been severely wounded, I assumed command of the force as senior officer. After consultation with Sir H. Stewart and Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable E. E. T. Boscawen, I determined to strengthen the position, and, after leaving a garrison there, to march to the Nile. A fort was constructed to protect the hospital, and a small work was erected on a knoll which commanded the zeriba at a distance of eighty yards on the south-west. These works were thrown up under heavy fire, which I regret to say caused several casualties.

'A company of the Guards Camel Regiment and one from the Mounted Infantry were thrown out as skirmishers to protect the troops whilst forming up outside the zeriba. The troops marched in square formation towards a gravel ridge, where a large force of the enemy was seen with banners, and left the ground at about 3 p.m. The enemy's sharpshooters kept up a brisk fire on the square during its march, and on approaching the ridge the spearmen, led by several Emirs on horseback, charged the troops. About 250 of the enemy, including five Emirs, were killed, and many more were wounded. The others fled towards Metammeh. The troops then marched to the Nile, and bivouacked on its bank.

'I entrusted the immediate command of the square to Lieutenant-Colonel Boscawen, to whom the success of the operations is largely due. Nothing could exceed the coolness of the troops, both whilst exposed to the fire of the sharpshooters in the morning, and to the charge of the spearmen in the afternoon. None of the enemy arrived within thirty yards of the square.

'On the 20th a village, on a gravel terrace near the Nile, was occupied and placed in a state of defence. A small garrison was left in it, and the troops then marched back to the zeriba to commence removing the stores to the new position. Unfortunately they could not all be moved at once, and the small work on the knoll was again left for the night. The wounded were, however, safely brought down to the village before sunset.

'On the 21st a reconnaissance in force was made of Metammeh, when it was found to have been placed in a state of defence with loop-holed walls, and three guns in position. During the reconnaissance four Egyptian steamers, under Nusri Pasha, appeared, and landed men and guns to take part in the operation.

'The remainder of the stores were brought down to the village, and a change was made in the disposition of the camp. The camp was moved down to the water's edge, and the village was held as a fortified outpost.

'The important news received from Khartoum, rendering it in my opinion imperative that I should carry out my original mission and proceed at once to that place, I handed over the military command to Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable E. E. T. Boscawen. On the 22nd January I went down the river with three steamers and two companies of Mounted Infantry, to make a reconnaissance in the direction of Shendy, and returned the same day.'

After the hardly-won victory of the 17th, Stewart's prompt advance on the Nile was a necessity, however much a night march might take it out of the

men ; otherwise time would be given to the rebels to concentrate again.

Stewart's orders were that if Metammeh was held in force, he was to establish himself between that place and Khartoum. Before he started from Abu Klea he learned that the enemy were entrenched at Metammeh. He therefore determined to wedge himself in between Metammeh and Khartoum, hoping to strike the river before daylight, a hope not destined to be realised. The enemy evidently expected him to attack Metammeh. Their mounted men were seen scouting during the morning of the 18th.

Before leaving Abu Klea Stewart established a strongly fortified post at the wells, where he left the wounded under the guard of 200 men of the Sussex Regiment.

With the exception of a halt just before daylight, the march was continued all night. The movement was necessarily slow as neglect of any precaution might have involved the column in ruin. The first part of the march was silent, orderly, and steady, considering the huge convoy of camels with ammunition and supplies. Towards morning the road lay for twelve miles over undulating ground, and through a jungle of mimosa, where the confusion and uproar of the camel-drivers repeatedly delayed progress. The camels too, being half starved, were so exhausted that it was necessary to make frequent stoppages to allow them to come up. All this delayed considerably the advance of the column, which had the further misfortune to miss the way, through either the timidity or treachery of the guide. Consequently it became evident that the object, viz., that of reaching the river at daylight, would not be attained. Under the circumstances it was deemed advisable to call a halt. Another reason why this course was taken

was that the column was not sure of its exact position.

When daylight dawned, Stewart found that the river was still some half-dozen miles distant, and again put his column in motion. Watch-fires of the Arabs had been seen during the night, probably lighted by rebel scouts. The shouts of the camel-drivers, perhaps, put the enemy on the alert, so that the appearance of the column before Metammeh was probably no surprise to them.

At all events, at seven o'clock the enemy were seen swarming over the hills in all directions, some coming from Metammeh, others from the southward. Their tom-toms were beating, and it was evident that they were in force. They were seen moving round as if to cut off the column from the Nile. Consequently a fight was inevitable, and Stewart determined that his men should not fight on empty stomachs, and the bugles sounded the halt. This halt was indeed indispensable, exhausted as the men were by their long night march. No sooner was the force dismounted and a square formed round the camels, than fires were lighted and breakfast was got ready.

Meanwhile the enemy commenced a steady fire at long range with their Remingtons upon our troops, who began to form a zeriba on a low, round gravel hill. The plain was dotted with bushes, and there were many depressions, of which the Arabs took every advantage, firing from concealment behind trees and tall grass. Steadily the men continued work, and soon a breast-work formed of sacks and barrels of stores, the saddles of the camels, brushwood and sand, was piled up. The work was very trying, for men fell fast.

It was a little after ten when Stewart fell severely wounded in the abdomen by a shot from the enemy, and from this moment Sir Charles Wilson took the command.

Other casualties occurred about the same time, including Lieutenant C. Crutchley, of the Scots Guards, wounded, and Mr. Cameron correspondent of the *Standard*, and Mr. Herbert correspondent of the *Morning Post*, killed. Mr. Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph* was also wounded. The British rifles all this time were replying as best they could to the enemy's fire, but the men were gradually being worn out, and their shooting was comparatively ineffective. The enemy being concealed in the long grass the men in the zeriba laboured under the disadvantage of being exposed as targets, without being able to strike back.

This went on for hours, the fire on both sides continuing without intermission, and men dropping fast. It became evident that this state of things could not last, and orders were given to construct strong works in which to place the heavy baggage and the wounded, in charge of a small detachment, whilst the square should take the initiative and march to the Nile then visible.

Under heavy fire the works were completed, a small redoubt being thrown up by Major Dorward and Lieutenant Lawson of the Engineers, and the zeriba strengthened. This was not accomplished without loss, twelve being killed and forty wounded up to this time. The baggage, camels, &c., were protected by the artillery and Gardner guns which were left in the zeriba.

Owing to the delay caused by strengthening the zeriba and constructing the redoubt, it was long past two o'clock when the square moved slowly out from the zeriba. The object of the advance was not so much to attack as to gain the desired position on the river. The movement was a strikingly bold one, as the smaller force left behind was exposed to great risks, and the larger one weakened by division. Everything depended on the steadiness of the advancing square. Had it

given way the small party remaining in the redoubt could not hope to hold out for any length of time.

The flying column was about 1200 strong, marching in much the same order as at Abu Klea. The front of the square was composed of the Naval Brigade and Grenadier Guards ; the right flank, of the Coldstreams, Scots Guards, and part of the Heavy Camel Corps ; and the left flank of the Mounted Infantry, while the Sussex Regiment and the remainder of the Heavy Camel Corps brought up the rear, with a section of a company of Mounted Infantry in each corner as a reserve. There was also a small party of dismounted men of the 19th Hussars as a reserve.

The square moved at a slow march across the open, covered by the fire of the Gardner gun in the redoubt, whilst flanking skirmishers threaded their way through the mimosas. The ground was rough and irregular, with bushes in all directions.

For two miles the enemy made no direct attack, but contented themselves with keeping up an incessant rifle-fire from a distance. However, on approaching the ridge mentioned in Sir Charles Wilson's despatch, and just as the square emerged from the bush-covered ground, two bodies of the enemy on foot, some thousands strong, were seen approaching in crescent formation. The square was at once halted and the men lay down, and delivered volley after volley with the utmost steadiness.

Soon the critical moment came when the charge mentioned by Sir Charles Wilson took place. The enemy's spearmen hurled themselves against the square. The troops never wavered for a moment, but cheered lustily when they saw the rush coming. One body of the assailants made for the left angle of the front face, where the Guards and Mounted Infantry were posted, the other charged the left rear. The first attack looked the more serious, but the Guards and Mounted Infantry

received the charge with a fire so deadly that the enemy dropped in lines, then recoiled and retired broken. The second attack was less resolute, though it also was a furious onslaught. This time it was the Heavy Camel Corps and Sussex Regiment that played a part, and the assailants met with such a fire that they broke before they arrived within 300 yards of the left rear.

Meanwhile another body, advancing from the south, was stopped by shells, fired with much precision, from Norton's guns in front. After these attacks the enemy drew off to Metammeh, leaving 250 men dead on the field. The fire of the riflemen in the bushes then ceased, and the square moved on without further molestation till at sunset it reached the Nile, where it bivouacked on the bank.

Lord Charles Beresford was in command at the zeriba. The small redoubt already mentioned was held by Lord Cochrane and forty of the Scots Greys. Whilst one body of the enemy was attacking the square, another body, mostly on horseback, made for the zeriba. The attack was sustained for two hours, when the enemy retreated before the steady fire kept up by the garrison. The assailants attempted several rushes, but without success, owing to the hot fire delivered from behind the breastwork.

The total loss of the enemy is unknown. Though the official despatches mention 250 as the number of killed, yet, considering the length of time the engagement, or rather series of engagements, lasted, it is probable that the total slain considerably exceeds that number. One estimate, indeed, has put the whole number of killed and wounded as high as 1800.

The British loss was twenty men killed, and sixty wounded. The officers and newspaper correspondents killed and wounded were as follows :—

Officers: killed.—19th Hussars: Quartermaster A. G. Lima; Commissariat and Transport Corps: Conductor of Supplies A. C. Jewell; also Messrs. St. Leger Herbert and Cameron, Correspondents. Wounded.—Staff: Brigadier-General Sir H. Stewart; Captain Lord Airlie, 10th Hussars, slightly. Heavy Camel Regiment: Major Lord A. Somerset, Royal Horse Guards. Guards: Lieutenant C. Crutchley, Scots Guards. Mounted Infantry: Lieutenant T. D. O. Snow, Somersetshire Light Infantry; Lieutenant C. P. Livingstone, Royal Highlanders, slightly. East Lancashire Regiment: Captain A. G. Leonard. Royal Navy: Lieutenant Munro. Also Mr. Burleigh, Correspondent, slightly.

The march of Sir Charles Wilson from the zeriba to the Nile was one of the most hazardous of military evolutions, and has been condemned by nearly all professional critics. In acting as he did, he not only divided his already reduced forces in the face of the enemy, but cut himself off from his baggage, artillery, and supplies. His justification is to be found only in his success.

The British forces were allowed to bivouac in peace on the Nile banks, and both officers and men, lying on the bare ground, found the rest of which they were so much in need. The only sign of the enemy's presence was the beating of the 'tom-toms' all night.

On the 20th the adjacent village of Gubat was occupied, and a small garrison being placed there, the rest of the troops, recruited and refreshed, marched back to relieve the party at the zeriba. As the returning column neared the work, the small garrison greeted it with hearty cheers. The work of removing the wounded, together with the camels, baggage, and guns, was then commenced, and continued until the whole were brought to the new position at Gubat.

Success justifies all risks, but it is impossible not to feel that the movement across the desert of so small a force as 1800 men against an unknown strength of Arabs was a highly venturesome proceeding. Had the operation been undertaken by an inferior general, or with troops of different mettle, the result would unquestionably have been disaster. It was considered as a conclusive argument against the Souakim-Berber route that it involved a desert march, and that it would be difficult to bring up a large force to fight at the further end at Berber, whereas by Sir Herbert Stewart's force a very severe action was fought at the end of a trying desert march, with the result of opening a line of communication from Cairo to Metammeh, of more than 1300 miles instead of one of 280 miles from the Red Sea to Berber. It may fairly be questioned, moreover, whether so great a resistance would have been offered at Berber; while, as a first objective, Berber, which was almost as accessible to Khartoum as Metammeh, would have been nearly as important for the purposes of the expedition.

But from any point of view, the desert march, taken as a whole, is entitled to rank as one of the most brilliant achievements of the British army.

The reconnaissance to Metammeh made on the 21st, and briefly referred to in the official report already set out, has been described as an unsuccessful attack.

In a later report, dated the 14th March, Sir Charles Wilson describes the operation as follows :—

‘ On the 21st a garrison having been left in camp to protect the wounded, the force marched towards Metammeh, which was found to be a long village of mud-houses with loopholed walls, and two or three mountain-guns. Whilst the reconnaissance was in progress, four Egyptian steamers, under Nusri Pasha, appeared and landed a contingent under Khasm-el-Mus Bey, which took part in the operations.

Whilst the guns were attempting to form a breach in the wall, Khasm-el-Mus informed me that he had seen the force under Feki Mustapha marching down the left bank, and that it would reach Metammeh before sunset, or very early next morning. It was, therefore, probable that the force would have to fight an unbeaten portion of the enemy within the next twenty-four hours; and as it had already lost one-tenth of its effective strength, and there were over 100 wounded in hospital, I hesitated to press an attack which could not have been carried to a successful issue without further heavy losses. I also considered that the town was too large for the force to hold after the losses it had sustained, and the return of the convoy and escort to Gakdul. Under these circumstances, I determined to withdraw without pressing the attack, and, at the same time, made arrangements for bringing in Major Davison and the stores which had been left at the zeriba.'

It is worthy of observation that, although a heavy fusillade was kept up by the enemy until one p.m., the British loss was only one man killed, and one officer, Major Poe, of the Royal Marines, wounded.

The four steamers which came to Sir Charles Wilson's assistance, proved to be Gordon's, sent from Khartoum to communicate with the expeditionary force. They had on board a force of Bashi-Bazouks and Egyptians, and some brass howitzers. The arrival of the steamers was greeted with loud cheers by the British soldiers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WILSON'S ADVANCE TO KHARTOUM.

Gordon's Message, Journals and Letters—The Situation at Khartoum—
Reconnaissance towards Shendy—Preparations for Departure—The
Start for Khartoum—The Journey—Loss of the Steamers and Rescue
of the Party—Lord Charles Beresford.

'KHARTOUM all right, can hold on for years, C. G. Gordon, 29, 12, 84,' was the cheering message which reached Sir Charles Wilson by Gordon's steamers. It had, like his previous message, been written on a tiny scrap of paper.

With the writing above mentioned came Gordon's Journals containing a narrative of events from the 10th September to the 14th December, certain private letters, and the following despatches addressed by him to 'the Chief of the Staff, Soudan Expeditionary Force' :—

'Khartoum, October 21st, 1884.

'As I have tendered the resignation of my commission in Her Majesty's service to His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief for submission to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, I would be obliged if you would inform the General Officer commanding Her Majesty's troops advancing for the relief of the garrisons of the Soudan, of this fact, in order that he may be *au fait* with the position. Appointed by Tewfik Pasha (the, *soi-disant* ruler of this land) as Governor-General, it is in my limits to appoint any other person I may select as, provisionally, Governor-General, subject to the approval of Tewfik Pasha, and to hand over the government to him.'

'Khartoum, December 14th, 1884.

'I send down the steamer *Bordein* to-morrow with Vol. 6 of my private journal containing account of the events in Khartoum from 5th November to 14th December. The state of affairs is such that one

cannot foresee further than five to seven days, after which the town may at any time fall. I have done all in my power to hold out, but I own I consider the position is extremely critical, almost desperate; and I say this without any feeling of bitterness with respect to Her Majesty's Government, but merely as a matter of fact. Should the town fall, it will be questionable whether it will be worth the while of Her Majesty's Government to continue its expedition, for it is certain that the fall of Khartoum will ensure that of Kassala and Senaar.'

The writing dated 29th December, 1884, containing the expression, 'Khartoum all right, can hold on for years,' was probably intended, like Gordon's previous message to the like effect, merely to convey the information that he was still holding out.

The wording of the document was simply a *ruse* in the event of the messenger who brought the message on foot to the steamer after she left Khartoum, being captured. This is apparent from the letter of the 14th December, in which Gordon says that after seven days the town might fall at any time, as well as from the statements of the Egyptian officers who accompanied the steamers. They reported that they had been for some weeks stationed at an island a short distance above Metammeh waiting for the arrival of the British column. They had assisted in getting messages into and out of Khartoum, where the situation was altogether most gloomy. Gordon himself was well, they said, but his soldiers were despairing of relief, and it was necessary that some Europeans should proceed with the utmost alacrity to Khartoum, in order to reassure the population and the troops.

Abdul Hamid Bey, who commanded one of the steamers, the *Bordein*, informed Sir Charles Wilson, that on leaving Khartoum on the 14th, Gordon had told him that if he (Abdul Hamid) did not return with English troops within ten days it would be too late; and that in that case he had better not attempt to return at all.

Sir Charles Wilson was in possession of this information on the 21st January, and there seems to have been no sufficient reason why he should not have proceeded to Khartoum without an hour's delay, in which case there is every probability that Khartoum would have been relieved, and Gordon saved. Had they sailed on the 21st they would have arrived, going no faster than they did, at Khartoum on the morning of January 25th. This question and Sir Charles Wilson's statements in justification of the course he adopted are dealt with later on.

On the 22nd it was decided to construct two forts. A village fort to be held by the Guards, and a river fort, containing the hospital, to be held by the remainder of the force. The three small guns of the column, together with some from the steamers, were put in position.

The same day the steamers were utilised by Sir Charles Wilson for the purposes of another reconnaissance, this time towards Shendy, a town opposite to Metammeh on the right bank of the Nile. Only a small force, consisting for the most part of a detachment of the Mounted Infantry, was embarked. Shendy was found to be in the possession of the enemy, though they were not in overwhelming force. One Krupp gun was mounted there. The steamers contented themselves with throwing a few shells into the place and then retired.

It was found that a portion of the enemy had occupied a small island in the Nile just opposite the British Camp, and the guns of the steamers were speedily brought to bear on them, and the infantry sharpshooters opening a steady fire drove them out of the island and across the river.

The whole of the 23rd was occupied in changing the crews and soldiers on board the steamers, and preparing for a start. Owing to the absence of coal, wood had to

be substituted, and the latter commodity was scarce. It was only obtained by landing-parties from the steamers carrying off the timber of which the sakheas or water-wheels were constructed.

A convoy of camels under Colonel Talbot was sent back to Gakdul after dark with despatches for Lord Wolseley, and instructions to bring up provisions. The escort of 400 men accompanying the convoy reduced the little garrison at Gubat to a total of 922 all told.

On the 24th, the third day after receipt of Gordon's last communication, two of the steamers started for Khartoum with twenty British soldiers on board. No information has been given why only two of the four vessels were despatched, nor why only twenty British soldiers were embarked.

Of course little more than a 'demonstration' could have been made with any force such as the steamers could have carried, even if all of them had been employed. Still the singular reduction from 14,000, the total of the British Army in Egypt, to 7000, the force told off for the expedition, then to 1800, the number of Sir Herbert Stewart's column, and finally to twenty, the number of Sir Charles Wilson's forlorn hope, cannot fail to strike the reader.

Khasm-el-Mus Bey was placed in charge of the steamer *Bordein*, and Abdul Hamid Bey in command of the steamer *Tala Hawiyeh*, after consultation with Lord Charles Beresford, who had been obliged to return to Hospital.

On the 24th Sir C. Wilson left in the *Bordein*, with Captain Gascoigne, Yorkshire Hussars, ten non-commissioned officers and men of the Royal Sussex, and one petty officer, artificer, Royal Navy; the *Tala Hawiyeh* followed with Captain Trafford and ten non-commissioned officers and men of the Royal Sussex,

Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, King's Rifles, and one petty officer, artificer, Royal Navy. Captain Trafford commanded the escort, and Captain Gascoigne and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley accompanied Wilson for service with Gordon, at Khartoum.

When near Sheikeih, on the left bank was seen in the distance a portion of the force under Feki Mustafa, which, it had been reported, was marching on Metammeh. It was ascertained afterwards that this force, about 3000 men, had halted on receiving news of the battle of Metammeh, and then retired to Wad Habeshi.

On the 26th two Shukriyehs came on board and reported that for the last fifteen days there had been fighting at Khartoum, and on the 27th a man shouted out from the left bank, that a camel-man had just passed with the news that Khartoum had fallen, and that Gordon had been killed.

On the 28th, a Shukriyeh on the right bank stated that Khartoum had fallen two days previously, and that Gordon had been killed. The news was generally discredited, and the vessels prepared to force their way past the enemies' batteries into Khartoum, the *Bordein* leading and the *Tala Hawiyeh* following close astern. The orders to the detachment of the Royal Sussex were to fire volleys at the embrasures of the batteries, whilst the Soudanese troops kept up an independent fire and the four guns on the steamers replied to the fire of the batteries.

On approaching Halfiyeh it was noticed that the large palm-grove there had been burned, and that three or four large nuggers were lying alongside the bank. On the attention of Khasm-el-Mus being called to this, he at once replied, 'Gordon's troops must be there, as the Mahdi has no boats.' Directly afterwards a heavy fire was opened upon the steamers from four guns, and from

rifles at from 600 to 900 yards range. One gun was in a sakhea pit at the water's edge, two in an earthwork a little above the sakhea, and one in the village. After passing Shamba, two guns on the right bank opened on the steamers while a heavy rifle-fire came from both banks, and this was sustained until they came within range of the guns of Omdurman. When abreast of Tuti Island, which it was expected to find in Gordon's possession, the vessels were received by a sharp musketry fire at from 75 to 200 yards range; three or four guns, of which one was a Krupp, opened fire from the upper end of Tuti, or from Khartoum, two guns from the fort at Omdurman, and a well-sustained rifle-fire from the left bank.

On reaching a point beyond Tuti, Wilson came to the conclusion that Khartoum was in the hands of the enemy, and that it would be a useless sacrifice of life to attempt to land or try to force a passage to the town itself; he therefore ordered the *Bordein* to turn and run down the river full speed. The *Tala Hawiyeh*, which had grounded for a few minutes, near the upper end of Tuti Island, followed, and the steamers drew up for the night near Tamanieb.

Here Wilson sent out two messengers, one to go to Khartoum to ascertain the fate of Gordon, the other to collect information. The latter, on his return, stated he had met a Jaalin Arab, who told him that Khartoum had fallen on the night of the 26th, through the treachery of Farag Pasha and the Mudir of the town, and that Gordon was dead. He also said that on the 27th the Mahdi had entered Khartoum, prayed in the principal mosque, and then retired to Omdurman, leaving the town to three days' pillage.

The reasons which led Wilson to the conclusion that Khartoum had fallen were :—The heavy fire brought to

bear from Tuti Island ; the absence of any fire from Khartoum in his support ; the fact that no Egyptian flag was flying from any place in or near the town, though Government and other houses were plainly visible ; the presence of a large number of dervishes with their banners on a sandspit ; and the fact that a number of Gordon's troop-boats and nuggers were lying along the the left bank of the White Nile under Omdurman Fort.

On the 29th the *Tala Hawiyeh* ran at full speed on a sunken rock in open water, and rapidly filled. The *Bordein* was brought up at a small island below the wreck, and before sunset Captain Trafford and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley came down with a large nigger, in which they placed every one on board the steamer, the two guns, and such of the ammunition as had not been damaged.

Feki-Abd-Er-Rahman, who had come down to the river with a flag of truce at Omdurman, and followed down to the scene of the wreck, came on board with a letter from the Mahdi, which was addressed to the party. The letter stated that Khartoum had been taken and Gordon killed, and offered a safe-conduct to any one sent to verify the facts. The Mahdi enjoined the English officers to become Moslems if they wished for peace, and promised protection to Khasm-el-Mus and his followers if they submitted. The messenger stated that General Gordon was with the Mahdi at Omdurman, and that the garrison of Tuti having refused to submit had been put to the sword.

Wilson made no reply to the Mahdi's letter, but, to secure a safe passage through the cataracts, where the slightest opposition would have been fatal to every one on board the steamers, Khasm-el-Mus, with Wilson's cognizance, answered that he would never give himself up unless the Mahdi sent him a special safe-conduct and

promise of safety. If this were sent he would surrender to Feki-Mustafa at Wad-Habeshi, where guns had been mounted to oppose the passage of the steamers.

On the 30th they passed the most difficult portion of the cataract without opposition (the result of Khasm-el-Mus' answer), for during several hours the soldiers and men on the steamer and nugger were at the mercy of a few sharpshooters.

Two Shukriyehs came on board with information that Gordon was shut up in the mission church at Khartoum with some faithful Shukriyehs.

On the 31st, after the *Bordein* had been lowered down a difficult gate with great care, she was run on a sunken rock off the island of Mernat between two and three miles above the enemy's position at Wad-Habeshi. The steamer was beached on the sandspit of a small island, and everything landed. The Island of Mernat, about forty yards distant, was occupied by a picket of the Royal Sussex and the crew and soldiers of the *Tala Hawiyeh*, and at nightfall the picket of the Sussex was withdrawn to the smaller island.

Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley was directed to proceed as soon as it was dark to Gubat, with information of the position of the expedition, and a request for assistance.

Wilson at first intended to cross to the right bank of the Nile, and march as soon as the moon rose, but finding it impossible to move the Soudanese troops, he bivouacked with Khasm-el-Mus on Mernat, whilst Captains Trafford and Gascoigne remained on the smaller island to guard the stores.

On the 1st February a zeriba was made on Mernat Island ; the four guns from the steamers were mounted, and all the ammunition and stores which had been saved were collected. Some Shukriyehs from the mainland visited the party, and said that since the fall of Khar-

toum they had determined to throw in their lot with the Mahdi ; they advised Khasm-el-Mus to do the same, but he replied he would never surrender without a letter from the Mahdi promising safety.

When the zeriba was finished, Wilson called the men to arms and, during the inspection which followed, was able to assure himself that a large proportion of the soldiers would remain loyal and fight to the last. One soldier deserted during the day. Two messengers were sent to Halfiyeh to obtain news from Khartoum.

On the 2nd Feki Mustafa and Sheikh Abulata crossed to the island and tried to persuade Khasm-el-Mus to submit, but he returned the same answer as before. A friendly Shukriyeh brought news that a steamer had left for the relief of the force at noon the previous day. A sister of Khasm-el-Mus, who had followed the steamers down the river, also arrived, with news that the families of all the officers on board the steamers had been killed at Khartoum, and that Gordon was killed whilst coming out of his room in Government House. Khasm-el-Mus' sister was sent back to Khartoum to obtain further information, and purchase back any of the family sold into slavery. During the afternoon Abdul-Hamid Bey, who had brought a strong letter of recommendation from Gordon to Lord Wolseley, deserted, as well as one of the Reises, two Buluk-Bashis, and four soldiers. As soon as Wilson was aware of this, he placed the remaining Reises and captains, who are all Dongolawis, and friendly to the Mahdi, under a guard of the Sussex, with orders that they were to be shot if they attempted to escape.

On the 3rd, Wilson ordered all the troops to be confined to the zeriba, and, in the event of the non-arrival of the steamer, made arrangements to seize Feki Mus-

tafa, who was again to visit the island, and keep him as hostage.

To return to Lieutenant Stuart Wortley : he left the island at 6.45 p.m. in a small rowing-boat with four English soldiers and eight natives, and floated past the enemy's works, who did not see him until opposite their last bonfire, when they fired several shots without effect. He then ordered the men to row hard, and reached the camp at Gubat at 3 a.m. on the 1st February without any further opposition.

The news brought by Wortley placed the force at Gubat in a state of consternation. The first necessity was, of course, to get Wilson's party off the island.

It was decided that Lord Charles Beresford should start early in the afternoon in one of the remaining steamers. It was also resolved to send off a convoy across the desert to bring up reinforcements in view of a probable advance of the Mahdi with the force which the capture of Khartoum had set free.*

Stuart Wortley left Gubat at 2 p.m. on board the *Safiyeh*, with Lord Charles Beresford in command ; a portion of the Naval Brigade, under Lieutenant Van Koughnet, twenty non-commissioned officers and privates of the Mounted Infantry under Lieutenant Bower, King's Royal Rifles, two Gardner guns, two 4-pounder brass mountain-guns.

On the 2nd a few shots were fired from the west bank. The vessel stopped for the night just past Gebel-Fangur. On the 3rd she started at 6.30 a.m. At 8 a.m. she came in sight of the enemy's works at Wad-Habeshi, where the Arabs could be seen running into the rifle-trench ; fire was opened with the bow gun about 1000 yards range. On nearing the

* The command at Gubat was taken by Colonel Mildmay Willson of the Scots Guards in the place of Colonel Boscawen who had fallen ill.

position the enemy opened a heavy rifle-fire, and a gun in an embrasure facing down the river also opened fire. The steamer replied with the Gardners and rifles, and also with a 4-pounder. When opposite the central embrasure the enemy moved their gun and fired, their shot passing over the steamer. The latter's fire was so rapid and well directed that the enemy were shy of putting their heads over the parapet to take aim. Having passed the embrasure facing up the river, where the enemy had their second gun, a round shot passed through the vessel's boiler, and caused the steam to escape in a huge volume. She proceeded about 300 yards further, while the steam lasted, and then dropped anchor at 500 yards from the enemy's position. Lieutenant Van Koughnet was shot through the thigh when serving the Gardner, and one blue-jacket was mortally wounded and two were severely scalded. The Gardners had to be moved astern of the battery, and a hole made in it to allow the gun and the Gardners to play upon the enemy's works. The boiler was found to be repairable. Firing continued very brisk until 10.30 a.m., when the enemy's fire was silenced.

Sir C. Wilson's party heard the *Safiyeh* coming into action with the enemy's battery at Wad-Habeshi; but shortly afterwards Captain Trafford, who was on the 'look-out' at the end of the island, reported that he had seen the steamer enveloped in smoke, and feared she had met with a serious accident. As the steamer continued to fire on the battery, and could be seen swinging at anchor it was determined to break up the zeriba at once and march down to her.

As soon as the order was given a scene of wild confusion arose, as it was impossible to keep the Soudanese under control, and the enemy opened a heavy rifle-fire when they noticed the movement. Eventually the guns,

ammunition, stores, wounded, and women, were placed in a nugger, and the troops assembled on the island. Captain Gascoigne, with a small guard of the Sussex, was put in charge of the nugger, with instructions to stop at the nearest point he could reach on the right bank.

Wilson then marched the British and Soudanese troops to the end of the island, whence they crossed to the right bank in a small boat. The crossing was covered by the detachment of the Sussex.

On reaching the nugger Captain Gascoigne proceeded down the river until he reached the right bank opposite the *Safiyeh*, whilst Wilson marched to the same place. Finding it difficult to communicate with Lord Charles Beresford by signal, he sent Captain Gascoigne, who volunteered for the service, in a small boat to the *Safiyeh* with the two naval artificers, and a native crew; the boat was received with a sharp rifle-fire from the enemy going and returning, but fortunately no one was hit. In the meantime Wilson had got one of the guns out of the nugger and brought it into action against the centre embrasure of the battery; whilst three marksmen of the Sussex made good practice at 1100 yards' range, and the remainder of the Sussex and the Soudanese were drawn up behind a sakhea channel.

Lord Charles Beresford having sent a message to say that his boiler, which had been pierced by a shot, would be ready by evening, and that he would pick the party up at a more convenient place about three miles lower down next morning, Wilson directed Captain Trafford to proceed down the river with the Sussex and a portion of the Soudanese under Khasm-el-Mus to form a zeriba at the selected point.

Wilson remained behind to cover the passage of the nugger with the gun and a detachment of Soudanese,

but she unfortunately ran on a sandbank, and did not get off before sunset. In dragging the gun down through the tangled vegetation after dark, the men, who had had no food, became exhausted, and it was found necessary to abandon the gun, which was spiked and thrown into the river. After sunset Captain Gascoigne endeavoured to run past the battery in the nugger, but she unfortunately grounded on two rocks opposite to and about 200 yards from the centre embrasure. Here she remained all night and until about 8 a.m. next morning, under a heavy fire from the battery and rifle-pits, but by most extraordinary good fortune no one was wounded.

On the 4th Lord Charles Beresford, having got up steam, ran past the battery which now reopened on him, and brought to a short distance below; he then sent a party of blue-jackets under Lieutenant Keppel, in a boat to Captain Gascoigne's assistance. For more than an hour the work of lightening the nugger had to be carried on under fire, and nothing could exceed the coolness and gallantry shown by Captain Gascoigne and by Keppel, who was struck by a spent ball during this trying time. When the nugger was clear of the rocks Lord Charles Beresford proceeded down stream, and embarked the soldiers and crews of the steamers by 11 a.m. The camp at Gubat was reached at 5.30 p.m.

Though the members of Wilson's expedition were under fire for so many days, their losses were only two Soudanese killed and twenty-five wounded. This was due to the excellent manner in which the steamers were protected.

The casualties on board Lord Charles Beresford's steamer have been already mentioned, and they also were comparatively small for the same reason.

It only remains to add that there are probably few

more gallant achievements recorded than the able and successful attempt at rescue made by Lord Charles Beresford in the face of overwhelming difficulties, and his exploits on this occasion only added to his deservedly high reputation for courage, perseverance, and fertility of resource.*

* A Court of Inquiry was held at Gubat to investigate charges of treachery against the two captains and one of the 'Reises' of the wrecked steamers. The 'Reis' was sentenced to death, but recommended to mercy on account of his having brought down Stuart Wortley in the boat.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FALL OF KHARTOUM.

The Fall of Khartoum—Major Kitchener's Report—The News received in England—The Earliest Reports, Excitement thereon—Sir Charles Wilson's Explanation—The Safety of the Expeditionary Force.

WITH regard to the actual circumstances attending the capture of Khartoum there are so many conflicting accounts, that it would be useless to place them before the reader. The most complete narrative is the report drawn up by Major Kitchener, and which is as follows :—

'The last accurate information received about Khartoum is contained in General Gordon's *Diary*, and dated the 14th of December, 1884. The state of the town was then very critical, and General Gordon states, "The town may fall in ten days." The fort of Omdurman had been cut off from communication with Khartoum since the 3rd of November; it was at that date provisioned for $1\frac{1}{2}$ months, and the Commandant, Farag Allah Bey, had requested further supplies of ammunition. The garrison may, therefore, be considered to have been in great difficulties for food and necessaries after the 20th of December. General Gordon had so weakened himself by sending away five steamers (four to meet the English expedition, and one with Colonel Stewart), that he found it impossible to check the Arabs on the White Nile, and therefore to keep open communication with the fort of Omdurman.

'According to General Gordon's statement, there were in the stores at Khartoum on the 14th of December 83,525 oke of biscuit, and 546 ardebs of dhourra. From the almost weekly statement of the amounts in store, it is calculated that, although General Gordon was able to reduce considerably the issue of dhourra, the biscuit ration to the troops had not been reduced up to the 14th of December. The amount in store would represent approximately eighteen days' rations for the garrison alone. Gordon had already, on the 22nd of November, found it necessary to issue 9600 lbs. of biscuit to the poor, and he then says, "I am

determined if the town does fall, the Mahdi shall find precious little to eat in it."

'There is little doubt that as the siege progressed, it was found necessary to issue a considerable amount of provisions to the poorer native inhabitants of Khartoum. It may, therefore, be considered that even on reduced rations the supply in store must have been almost, if not quite, exhausted about the 1st of January, 1885. The town was then closely encircled by the rebels, who doubtless increased the intensity of the attack as they approached nearer and nearer to the works.

'The Mahdi was fully aware from deserters of the straits to which the garrison were reduced from want of food; and it was his intention that the town should fall into his hands without fighting, being obliged by famine to surrender.

'About the 6th January, General Gordon, seeing that the garrison were reduced to great want of food, and that existence for many of the inhabitants was almost impossible, issued a proclamation offering to any of the inhabitants who liked free permission to leave the town and go to the Mahdi. Great numbers availed themselves of this permission, and General Gordon wrote letters to the Mahdi requesting him to protect and feed these poor Moslem people, as he had done for the last nine months. It has been estimated that only about 14,000 remained in the town out of a total of 34,000 inhabitants, the number obtained by a census of the town in September.

'General Gordon kept heart in the garrison by proclamations announcing the near approach of the English relief expedition, and praising them for the resistance they had made, as well as by the example of his unshaken determination never to surrender the town to the rebels.

'It appears probable, though the precise date cannot be exactly verified, that the fort of Omdurman fell into the hands of the rebels on or about the 13th of January. The garrison were not injured, and Farag Allah Bey, the commander, was well treated in the rebel camp, as an inducement for any waverers in the Khartoum garrison to join the Mahdi's cause. The fall of Omdurman must have been a great blow to the garrison of Khartoum, who thus lost their only position on the west bank of the White Nile. The Arabs were able then, by the construction of batteries along the river bank, to entirely close the White Nile to Gordon's steamers. Having accomplished this, they could establish ferries on the White Nile (south of Khartoum), and have constant and rapid communication from Omdurman village and camp to their positions along the south front.

'About the 18th of January, the rebel works having approached the south front, a sortie was made by the troops, which led to desperate fighting. About 200 of the garrison were killed, and, although large numbers of the rebels were said to have been slain, it does not appear that any great or permanent advantage was obtained by the

besieged garrison. On the return of the troops to Khartoum after this sortie, General Gordon personally addressed them, praising them for the splendid resistance they had made up to that time, and urging them still to do their utmost to hold out, as relief was near; indeed, the English might arrive any day, and all would then be well. The state of the garrison was then desperate from want of food. All the donkeys, dogs, cats, rats, &c., had been eaten; a small ration of gum was issued daily to the troops, and a sort of bread was made from pounded palm-tree fibres. Gordon held several councils of the leading inhabitants, and on one occasion had the town most rigorously searched for provisions. The result, however, was very poor, only yielding four ardebs of grain through the whole town; this was issued to the troops. Gordon continually visited the posts, and personally encouraged the soldiers to stand firm; it was said that during this period he never slept.

'On the 20th of January the news of the defeat of the Mahdi's picked troops at Abu Klea created consternation in the Mahdi's camp. A council of the leaders was held, and it is said a considerable amount of resistance to the Mahdi's will and want of discipline was shown. On the 22nd the news of the arrival of the English on the Nile, at Metameh, which was thought to have been taken, led the Mahdi to decide to make at once a desperate attack upon Khartoum, before reinforcements could enter the town.

'On the 23rd General Gordon had a stormy interview with Farag Pasha. An eye-witness states that it was owing to Gordon having passed a fort on the White Nile which was under Farag Pasha's charge and found it to be inadequately protected. Gordon is said to have struck Farag Pasha on this occasion. It seems probable to me that at this interview Farag Pasha proposed to Gordon to surrender the town, and stated the terms the Mahdi had offered, declaring that in his opinion they should be accepted. Farag Pasha left the palace in a great rage, refusing the repeated attempts of other officers to effect a reconciliation between him and Gordon. On the following day General Gordon held a council of the notables at the palace. The question of the surrender of the town was then discussed, and General Gordon declared that whatever the council decided, he would never surrender the town. I think it very probable that on this occasion General Gordon brought Farag Pasha's action and proposals before the council; and it appears that some in the council were of Farag Pasha's opinion, that the town should resist no longer, and should be surrendered on the terms offered by the Mahdi. General Gordon would not, however listen to this proposal.

'On the 25th Gordon was slightly ill, and as it was Sunday, he did not appear in public. He had, however, several interviews with leading men of the town, and evidently knew that the end was near. It has been said that Gordon went out in the evening and crossed the river to Tuti Island on board the *Ismailia*, to settle some dispute among the

garrison there. This statement has not been verified by other witnesses, but owing to it the rumour subsequently arose among the black troops in Omdurman that Gordon had escaped that night on board the *Ismailia*. The facts, however, that both steamers were captured by the rebels, that the *Ismailia* was afterwards used by Mahommed Ahmed when he visited Khartoum, and the very full and complete evidence that General Gordon was killed at or near the palace, entirely dispel any doubt on the matter. If he crossed the river to Tuti, there is no doubt he returned later to his palace in Khartoum.

‘On the night of the 25th many of the famished troops left their posts on the fortifications in search of food in the town. Some of the troops were also too weak, from want of nourishment, to go to their posts. This state of things was known in the town, and caused some alarm; many of the principal inhabitants armed themselves and their slaves, and went to the fortifications in place of the soldiers. This was not an unusual occurrence, only on this night more of the inhabitants went as volunteers than on previous occasions.

‘At about 3.30 a.m. on the morning of Monday, the 26th, a determined attack was made by the rebels on the south front. The principal points of attack were the Boori Gate, at the extreme east end of the line of defence on the Blue Nile; and the Mesalamieh Gate, on the west side near the White Nile. The defence of the former post held out against the attack, but at the Mesalamieh Gate the rebels, having filled the ditch with bundles of straw, brushwood, beds, &c., brought up in their arms, penetrated the fortifications, led by their Emir, Waden-Nejumi. The defenders of the Boori Gate, seeing the rebels inside the fortifications in their rear, retired, and the town was then at the mercy of the rebels.

‘General Gordon had a complete system of telegraphic communication with all the posts along the line of fortifications, and there must have been great irregularity in the telegraph stations to account for his being left entirely unwarned of the attack and entry of the rebels. Doubtless, Farag Pasha was responsible, to some extent, for this.

‘Farag Pasha has been very generally accused of having either opened the gates of Khartoum himself, or of having connived at the entrance of the rebels; but this has been distinctly denied by Abdullah Bey Ismael, who commanded a battalion of irregular troops at the fall of the town, as well as by about thirty refugee soldiers, who lately escaped, and came in during the last days of the English occupation of Dongola. The accusations of treachery have all been vague, and are, to my mind, the outcome of mere supposition. Hassan Bey Balmasawy, who commanded at the Mesalamieh Gate, certainly did not make a proper defence, and failed to warn General Gordon of the danger the town was in. He afterwards appears to have taken a commission under the Mahdi, and to have gone to Kordofan with the Emir Abu-Anga.

In my opinion, Khartoum fell from sudden assault, when the garrison were too exhausted by privations to make proper resistance.

‘Having entered the town, the rebels rushed through the streets, shouting and murdering everyone they met, thus increasing the panic, and destroying any opposition.

‘It is difficult, from the confused accounts, to make out exactly how General Gordon was killed. All the evidence tends to prove it happened at or near the palace, where his body was subsequently seen by several witnesses. It appears that there was one company of black troops in the palace besides General Gordon’s cavasses; some resistance was made when the rebels appeared, but I think this was after General Gordon had left the palace. The only account, by a person claiming to be an eye-witness of the scene of General Gordon’s death, relates:—“On hearing the noise I got my master’s donkey and went with him to the palace; we met Gordon Pasha at the outer door of the palace. Muhamed Bey Mustapha, with my master, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and about twenty cavasses, then went with Gordon towards the house of the Austrian Consul Hansel, near the church, when we met some rebels in an open place near the outer gate of the palace. Gordon Pasha was walking in front leading the party. The rebels fired a volley and Gordon was killed at once; nine of the cavasses, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and Muhamed Bey Mustapha, were killed, the rest ran away.”

‘A large number of witnesses state Gordon was killed near the gate of the palace, and various accounts have been related from hearsay of the exact manner in which he met his end. Several reliable witnesses saw and recognised Gordon’s body at the gate of the palace; one describes it as being dressed in light clothes.

‘The Soudan custom of beheading and exposing the heads of adversaries slain in battle was, apparently, carried out, as was done by the Mudir of Dongola after the battle at Korti. The Bagara savages seem to have had some doubt which was Gordon’s body, and great confusion occurred in the Mahdi’s camp at Omdurman, where the heads were exposed, as to which was Gordon’s head: some recognising, others denying the identity of Gordon’s head. One apparently reliable witness relates that he saw the rebels cut off Gordon’s head at the palace gate after the town was in their hands.

‘The massacre in the town lasted some six hours, and about 4000 persons, at least, were killed. The black troops were spared, except those who resisted at the Boori Gate and elsewhere; large numbers of the townspeople and slaves were killed and wounded. The Bashi-Bazouks and white regulars, numbering 3327, and the Shaigia irregulars, numbering 2330, were mostly all killed in cold blood, after they had surrendered and been disarmed. Consul Hansel was killed in his own house. Consul Nicola, a doctor, and Ibrahim Bey Fauzi, who was Gordon’s secretary, were taken prisoners; the latter was wounded.

'At about ten a.m. the Mahdi sent over orders to stop the massacre which then ceased. The rebels fell to looting the town, and ordered all the inhabitants out of it; they were searched at the gate as they passed, and were taken over to Omdurman, where the women were distributed as slaves among the rebel chiefs. The men, after being kept as prisoners under a guard for three days, were stripped, and allowed to get their living as best they could.

'It has been stated that the Mahdi was angry when he heard of General Gordon's death; but, though he may have simulated such a feeling on account of the black troops, there is very little doubt, in my opinion, that, had he expressed the wish, Gordon would not have been killed. The presence of Gordon as a prisoner in his camp would have been a source of great danger to the Mahdi, for the black troops from Kordofan and Khartoum all loved and venerated Gordon, and many other influential men knew him to be a wonderfully good man. The want of discipline in the Mahdi's camp made it dangerous for him to keep as a prisoner a man whom all the black troops liked better than himself, and in favour of whom, on a revulsion of feeling, a successful revolt might take place in his own camp. Moreover, if Gordon was dead, he calculated the English would retire and leave him in peace.

'The Mahdi had promised his followers as much gold and silver as they could carry when Khartoum fell, and immense disappointment was expressed at the failure to find the Government treasury.

'Three days after the fall of the town Farag Pasha was brought up to show where the Government money was hid; as he was naturally unable to do this, owing to there not being any, he was killed on the public market-place at Omdurman. Many others were put to torture to disclose where their wealth was hid, with varying results.

'On the third day after the fall of Khartoum many of the prisoners saw Sir Charles Wilson's steamers off Tuti Island, with the English on board: some were present in the batteries at Omdurman when the rebels opened fire on the steamers.

'The number of white prisoners in the Mahdi's camp has been variously stated; a Greek, escaped from Khartoum, reports, when the place fell there were forty-two Greeks, five Greek women, one Jewess, six European nuns, and two priests: of these, thirty-four Greeks were murdered.

'The document bears ninety-six signatures of Europeans; but some of them are undoubtedly spurious, as that of Father Luigi Bonomi, who has since escaped from El Obeid, never having been at Khartoum.

'The memorable siege of Khartoum lasted 317 days, and it is not too much to say that such a noble resistance was due to the indomitable resolution and resource of one Englishman.'

It should be added that the conclusion come to

by Major Kitchener, that treachery had nothing to do with the fall of Khartoum, is opposed not only to Gordon's own ideas as to what was to happen, but also to the accounts given by nearly every one else after the occurrence.

M. Zigada, a Greek merchant, who escaped from Khartoum, gave the following account of its capture.

He says Khartoum was betrayed by the merchants there, who desired to make terms with the enemy, not by Farag Pasha. The Mahdi was compelled to take Khartoum, because he saw that as his followers were beaten at Metammeh, the town would inevitably fall into the hands of the English, and in that case his cause would be ruined. He spared no promises or bribes to the merchants in Khartoum in order to facilitate its capture, and having learned the favourable moment and place for attack, he made an assault in full force at one of the gates, and literally swept away the defenders, enfeebled by privation and disease. After a sharp fusillade, lasting not longer than ten minutes, Khartoum was in the hands of the Mahdists, before Gordon or his Negro troops knew anything about it. Gordon was cut down, and the Negroes butchered to a man. The chief merchants who had betrayed the city had their lives spared on condition of yielding their fortunes ; many Europeans were killed, but a large number of European women and children were reserved as slaves.

The news of the fall of Khartoum reached the War Office in London at a quarter of an hour before midnight, on the 4th February. It was communicated by a despatch from Lord Wolseley sent from Korti at 9.10 p.m. on the same day, and from which the following is an extract :—

‘ News in this moment from Gubat. Khartoum is reported to have fallen, but commanding officer there gives no particulars. Sir C. Wilson

is said by a correspondent to have reached Khartoum to find it taken, and returned under heavy fire from neighbouring bank. It is reported to me by officer commanding at Gubat that on return journey, below cataract, between thirty and forty miles from Gubat, Sir C. Wilson and party are on an island quite safe, and steamer had gone from Gubat to bring them to that place. I think there need not be any anxiety on their score. Nothing is known of Gordon's fate; most probably a prisoner. Correspondent says place was delivered to Mahdi by treachery. Sir Herbert Stewart doing well.

'Metammeh is still held by enemy. Our post at Gubat near it is very strong. All wounded, except seven officers and thirty-five soldiers and two natives, had been removed to Gakdul. All the wounded at Abu Klea, except about four, were to be removed to Gakdul by same convoy.

'Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley's report just received. He states as follows:—"We went in steamers with Sir C. Wilson to Khartoum, 28th January, having had to run by Halfiya under heavy fire of four guns and musketry. Heavy fire opened on them from Tuti Island and Omdurman and Khartoum. They could not land under such opposition, so turned round and ran down stream. No flags flying from Government House in Khartoum, and the house appeared wrecked. Only one man killed and five wounded in steamers. On the 31st January the steamers on which were Sir C. Wilson and all his party, were wrecked about four miles above enemy's position, below bottom of Shabluka Cataract; the other steamers had been previously wrecked on 29th January. We reached Gubat in small boats at 2 p.m. same day." Fall of Khartoum, on 26th January, he reports to be without doubt, but fate of Gordon uncertain, as reports are conflicting, but general opinion is he is killed, but no preponderance of evidence either way. Some say he is shut up in church at Khartoum with some Greeks. Fall of Khartoum has determined Shaikiyeh tribes to join the Mahdi, so east bank of Nile, as well as left bank, is now hostile to us.'

For some time the War Office officials, many of whom were summoned on receipt of the despatch, hesitated to believe the news it contained, and the first idea appears to have been to withhold it from the public until it should be confirmed by later intelligence.

The fact that important despatches had arrived became known early on the 5th, but on inquiry at the War Office the representatives of the Press Association were informed that nothing would be published until the following day. However, shortly before eight

o'clock, a rumour gained currency that the city which Gordon had so successfully defended for nearly eleven months had fallen, and the statement was published in second editions of several morning papers.

The announcement created great surprise and excitement among all classes, and for some time was received with expressions of doubt and disbelief, as it was fully expected that his rescue by Sir Herbert Stewart's force was only a matter of a few days. Gordon's position was believed to be secure, especially as in his last letter to Lord Wolseley he had declared, "Khartoum all right. Can hold out for years." By noon all doubt as to the authenticity of the intelligence was dispelled by the publication of the War Office despatch.

The special correspondent of the *Daily News* telegraphed on the 8th as follows :—

'Unfortunately no doubt can now exist that General Gordon was among those massacred when Khartoum fell into the hands of the rebels. Natives who escaped describe him as having been killed in coming out of his house to rally his faithful troops, who were taken by surprise. They were cut down to a man. For hours the best part of the town was the scene of a merciless massacre. Even the women and children were not spared. All the notables, except the treacherous Pashas and their followers, were put to the sword. Gordon's steamers and nuggers were seen lying beside the banks on the Omdurman side, which was occupied by rebels.'

On the 12th Lord Wolseley telegraphed as follows from Korti :—

'Following received from General Brackenbury :—Kirbeka, February 11.—Following is translation of a document found to-day by a private soldier in Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in a donkey's saddle-bag about 400 yards behind the position we captured yesterday. Document begins : — "A copy of a letter received from the Governor-General of Berber to the Governor of the district. In the name of God, &c., from Mohammed Kheir Abdullah Khoy Fall, Emir General of Berber, to his friend Abdul Magid Abi El Lekalik, and all his men. I inform you that to-day, after the mid-day prayer, we received a letter from the faithful Khalifa Abdullah Eben Mohammed, in which he tells us that Khartoum was taken on Monday, the 9th Rabi,

1302, on the side of El Haoui, in the following manner :—The Mahdi prayed upon his dervishes and his troops to advance against the fortifications, and entered Khartoum in a quarter of an hour. They killed the traitor Gordon, and captured the steamers and boats. God has made him glorious. Be grateful and thank and praise God for his unspeakable mercy. I announce it to you. Tell your troops.' Document ends. It is dated the 13th Rabi, &c. On it is written, "Received Friday, 20th Rabi." Shall continue my advance to-morrow. Brackenbury's message ends. The 9th Rabi is January 26.'

There was no longer the possibility of doubt as to the fate of Gordon, and England realised to the fullest extent the bitterness of a great national disappointment. It was felt that all the gallantry and devotion of the officers and men under General Stewart had been unavailing; that the costly Nile Expedition had totally failed; and that Gordon had been allowed to perish by the country to which he looked for rescue.

The general feeling was intensified by the reflection that but two days elapsed from the fall of Khartoum before the British troops appeared before Khartoum. The Government was bitterly reproached with having been once more 'Too Late.'

As to the part taken by Sir Charles Wilson in the affair, there was a strong tendency to censure the delay that occurred in the departure of the steamers for Khartoum.

It is only fair to give Wilson's explanation, which appeared in the form of a letter to Lord Wolseley. The former says that the steamers from Khartoum reached Gubat on the 21st January, whilst the British were engaged with the enemy at Metammeh; and Wilson received the letters which General Gordon had sent down between three and four p.m. on that day. He at once determined to proceed to Khartoum, but several considerations led him to delay his start. He, however,

observes that if he had left on the morning of the 22nd, and travelled at the same rate as he did, he should only have reached Khartoum at midday on the 26th, after it had fallen. The considerations which guided him were :—

‘1st. The military position. The force had been much weakened by its heavy losses on the 17th and 19th ; it was to be still further weakened by the return of the convoy and its escort to Gakdul, and it was hampered by the large number of wounded. Sir H. Stewart had been severely wounded, and Colonel Burnaby, who was to have commanded at Metammeh, had been killed ; the horses of the 19th Hussars were so “done up,” they could not reconnoitre any distance from the camp, and the camels also required rest and food. On the 18th we heard that reinforcements for the enemy were advancing from Omdurman and Berber ; on the 19th we fought the reinforcement from Omdurman, and I had every reason to believe that the report of a *force advancing from Berber*, which came from the same source as the other, was correct. On the 20th I heard that another force under Fekhi Mustafa was *advancing from Omdurman*, and a repetition of the report about the Berber force. On the 21st Khasm-el-Mus Bey told me he had seen Fekhi Mustafa’s force on the march, and that it would reach Gubat before sunset or early on the 22nd. My information thus led me to expect an advance of the enemy from the north and south, and I felt that I could not leave the small British force in its position on the Nile without first ascertaining whether it was liable to an immediate attack. I therefore went down the river, on the 22nd, as far as Shendy, to see if any force of the enemy were advancing.

‘2nd. General Gordon, in a most characteristic letter, addressed to the Chief of the Staff or to the officer commanding the British advance guard, insisted strongly on our taking actual command of the steamers, and removing from them all Pashas, Beys, and men of *Turk, or Egyptian origin*. He wrote in strong terms of the uselessness of these men in action, and begged that if the boats were not manned by British sailors, they should be sent back to him with none but Soudanese crews and soldiers. It was originally intended that the steamers should be manned by the Naval Brigade ; but Lord Charles Beresford was in hospital, unable to walk, and all the other officers of the brigade, and several of the best petty officers and men, had been killed or wounded. It was therefore impossible to carry out the original plan ; and though Lord Charles Beresford, in the most gallant way, offered to accompany me, I felt that I could not deprive the force of the only naval officer with it, especially as the steamers left behind might be called upon at any time to take part in active operations against the enemy. It was therefore necessary to select Soudanese officers, crews, and soldiers from

the four ships, and to transfer them to the two steamers going to Khartoum. This was the chief reason for the delay on the 23rd.

'3rd. I knew that Omdurman was in the hands of the Mahdi, and Khasm-el Mus told me that the enemy had several guns mounted on the river-bank. I expected, therefore, to have to fight my way up the river, with Soudanese crews, in steamers like the penny boats on the Thames, which a single well-directed shell would disable, and to encounter a very heavy fire from Omdurman when running into Khartoum. It was consequently *necessary to have the engines overhauled*, and, as far as time would allow, to prepare the steamers for the heavy fire they would have to encounter. In all these preparations I received much advice and assistance from Lord Charles Beresford and aid from his artificers. N.B.—On ascending the river we found that the gun in the battery near Gandattu had been taken to Shendy the previous day, and that the guns at Wad-Habeshi had been taken away by Fekhi Mustafa, whose force we saw on the left bank, about twelve miles above the camp.

'4th. I was aware from General Gordon's letter of the 11th of November, 1884, and from the letters sent down by the *Bordein* on the 14th of December, that he expected Khartoum to fall about Christmas Day. I was also aware, from information received before leaving Korti, that provisions were very scarce in the city. I knew that Khartoum must be still holding out, and *there was nothing to show that the expected crisis which* had been delayed so long would occur within the next few days. I rather hoped that the result of the battle of Abou Klea, which was known to Khasm-el Mus the same evening, and must have been known in the Mahdi's camp on the 19th, and possibly in Khartoum the same day, would have delayed the crisis. Unfortunately, it appears to have had the opposite effect.

'The only day which might have been saved was the 22nd, as the reconnaissance showed that the force had nothing to fear from the Berber direction; but, I think, that if I were again placed in similar circumstances I should act in the same way. From the moment the steamers started on the morning of the 24th no time was lost. No one can regret the untimely death of General Gordon more than I do, or could have been more anxious to relieve him; but I do not think that any action of mine could have saved his life or averted the fall of Khartoum.'

In presenting the letter to Lord Hartington, Lord Wolseley contented himself by saying that the reasons given by Sir Charles Wilson must speak for themselves.

With regard to his explanation, the following observations occur :—

As to the weakening of the force at Gubat. Considering the small number of men (twenty British soldiers and some Soudanese) which eventually left by the steamers, it is difficult to imagine that the force could have been thereby weakened to any appreciable extent.

The reconnaissance towards Shendy, which occupied the whole of the 22nd and produced no result, was a distinct waste of time. Granted that the news of the advance of the enemy from either Omdurman or Berber was correct, there was no reason to suppose that the former would be made by water, or that if it were, that Gordon's two steamers with the British and Soudanese on board, would not have been able to fight their way through, whereas as regards a force coming from Berber it would obviously not have interfered with the steamers in any way.

Granting that it was necessary to change the 'Pashas, Beys, and men of Turk or Egyptian origin' on board the vessels, it is inconceivable that this operation should have required the whole of the 23rd for its accomplishment.

As to the condition of the steamers. They had already been engaged with the enemy ; they had made the voyage from Khartoum ; had taken part in the reconnaissance to Shendy ; and were therefore, presumably, fit for the work which they were expected to perform. Even were it otherwise, the erection of the necessary fittings for the protection of the engines, &c., could have been attended to on the voyage to Khartoum quite as well as whilst the vessels were lying at Gubat.

The fact that Gordon had already held out long after the date at which he had stated he expected Khartoum to fall, can hardly be called a sufficient reason for delaying to go to his assistance at the earliest

possible moment, otherwise Wilson might have been justified in waiting until the whole column was in a position to advance.

Wilson has been blamed for not having listened to the entreaties of others to start earlier, and for not having made a serious effort to ascertain Gordon's fate. Censure on either of these grounds is probably unjust. The only person who appears to have urged an immediate start, seems to have been Guku, the Greek to whom Gordon intrusted his diaries, and who accompanied Nouri Pasha. The former stated that he urged Sir Charles, but in vain, not to lose a moment, as every hour was of inestimable importance. There is no other proof that he was urged by any one else in the matter, nor is it likely that he would be considering that he was solely intrusted with the duty of communicating with Gordon. What has preceded will show that when Khartoum was reached, everything that was humanly possible to accomplish was effected.

The only error was in not disregarding every other consideration and pushing on at all hazards the moment the steamers became available. That this could only have been accomplished by incurring dangers greater even than those which were ultimately encountered is likely enough. But it was, as the result showed, the only means by which the failure of the expedition might have been avoided.

Not only had the British public to support the disappointment of failure, but there were also grave misgivings as to the safety of the Expeditionary Force.

With Khartoum in the Mahdi's power the whole situation was changed. His army instead of being concentrated before Khartoum, was set free to strike a blow at any point which he might think opportune for attack.

Not merely was the small force at Gubat in extreme and obvious danger, but Wolseley's entire army was now divided and split up in fragments. One of these was at Gubat, in immediate proximity to the fortified town of Metammeh held by a superior force. Another was isolated near Kirbekan, where the enemy were reported to be in considerable strength; a third remained with Lord Wolseley at the head-quarters at Korti. In addition, detachments were scattered across the Bayuda desert at the different points of communication. It was felt that the issues involved were not only the honour and credit of the British army, but the lives of the whole force engaged in the Expedition. Military critics agreed that an attempt at a retreat across the Bayuda desert might be open to manifest dangers. Supposing the date given for the fall of Khartoum to be correct, the interval would, it was argued, suffice for the rebels to concentrate along the line from Khartoum to Berber, on which line they already held Metammeh and Berber in force.

Opinions differed greatly as to what course should be adopted. Many thought that the whole force of the Expedition should for the moment be concentrated on the capture and holding of Berber, whilst reinforcements from India or England landing at Souakim, should either ensure the safe retreat of the troops, or allow of the recapture of Khartoum and the chastisement of the rebels.

What was done will appear in another chapter.

CHAPTER XXV.

GORDON'S DIARIES.

Gordon's Diary, his idea as to the Expedition—His Proposal as to Zubeir—His Soudan Policy—His Views of the Situation—The Stewart Expedition—Gordon's Humour—The Mahdi—Desperate Character of the Situation—Documents in the Mahdi's Possession—Reflections on the British Government—The Steamers engaged—Slatin Bey—Last Incidents of the Siege.

GORDON'S journals commenced on 10th September, 1884, and are continued to 14th December, 1884. Want of space renders it necessary to give only a few extracts.

Gordon seems to have felt the announcement that the object of Lord Wolseley's expedition was to relieve him, not less acutely than the neglect and indifference with which he had been treated by the Government. More than once he recurs to the subject, and the receipt of some newspapers mentioning the departure of the Gordon Relief Expedition drew from him the following comments :—

'I altogether decline the imputation that the projected expedition has come to *relieve me*; it has come to save our national honour in extricating the garrisons, &c., from the position our action in Egypt has placed these garrisons in. I was relief expedition No. 1. They are relief expedition No. 2. As for myself I could make good my retreat at any moment, if I wished. . . . We, the first and second expeditions, are equally engaged for the honour of England. This is fair logic. *I came up to extricate the garrisons and failed. Earle comes up to extricate garrisons and (I hope) succeeds. Earle does not come to extricate me.* . . . I am not the *rescued lamb*, and will not be.'

It will not excite any great surprise that General Gordon should have felt bound to come to the conclusion that—

'We are wonderful people ; it was never our Government that made us a grand nation ; our Government has been ever the drag upon our wheels. It is of course on the cards that Khartoum is taken under the nose of the expeditionary force, which will be *just too late*.'

On the subject of how the expedition should advance, and of what it ought to do on arrival, he wrote the following :—

'My view is this, as to the operations of British forces. I will put three steamers, each with two guns on them, and an armed force of infantry at disposal of any British authority. Will send these steamers to either Metammeh, opposite Shendy, or to the cataract below Berber to there meet any British force which may come across country to the Nile. These steamers with this force coming across country will (D.V.) capture Berber and then communicate with Khartoum. . . . When Berber is taken I should keep the bulk of the forces there, and send up the fighting column to Khartoum, after having arranged for its provisions, for I cannot feed them. You must be here six months. How will you spend it ? Will you at the end of six months allow it to be said you are kicked out, or will you not establish some government and retire with dignity ? The cost is the same in both cases in money, but in honour one costs a great deal more.'

On the same subject he adds :—

'I cannot too much impress on you that this expedition will not encounter any enemy worth the name in a European sense of the word ; the struggle is with the climate and destitution of the country. It is one of time and patience, and of small parties of determined men, backed by native allies, which are got by policy and money. A heavy lumbering column, however strong, is nowhere in this land. Parties of forty or sixty men, swiftly moving about, will do more than any column. If you lose two or three, what of it ?—it is the chance of war. Native allies above all things, at whatever cost. It is the country of the irregular, not of the regular. If you move in mass you will find no end of difficulties ; whereas, if you let detached parties dash out here and there, you will spread dismay in the Arab ranks. The time to attack is the dawn, or rather before it (this is stale news), but sixty men would put these Arabs to flight just before dawn, which one thousand would not accomplish in daylight. This was always Zubehr's tactics. The reason is that the strength of the Arabs is their horsemen, who do not dare to act in the dark. I do hope you will not drag on that artillery ; it can only produce delay, and do little good. I can say I owe the defeats in this country to having artillery with me, which delayed me much ; and it was the artillery with Hicks which, in my opinion, did for him.'

General Gordon's two principal propositions were either to send up Zubehr or to hand the Soudan over to the Sultan, giving the Porte a sum of money for the purpose of pacifying the country. With regard to the former suggestion, which he evidently thought would prove only a stop-gap, he said :—

‘ Had Zubehr Pasha been sent up when I asked for him, Berber would in all probability never have fallen, and one might have made a Soudan Government in opposition to the Mahdi. We chose to refuse his coming up because of his antecedents *in re* slave-trade. Granted that we had reason ; yet, as we take no precautions as to the future of these lands with respect to the slave-trade, the above opposition seems absurd. I will not send up A because he will do this, but I will leave the country to B, who will do exactly the same.’

On the next proposal he wrote:—

‘ The Turks are the best solution, though most expensive. They would keep the Soudan, give them 2,000,000*l.* The next best is Zubehr with 500,000*l.*, and 100,000*l.* a-year for two years. He will keep the Soudan for a time. In both cases slave-trade will flourish. Thus you will be quiet in Egypt, and will be able to retreat to Egypt in January 1885. If you do not do this, then be prepared for a deal of worry and danger, and your campaign will be entirely unprofitable and devoid of prestige ; for the day after you leave Khartoum the Mahdi will walk in and say he drove you out, which is not pleasant in India or elsewhere.’

What Gordon's policy in the Soudan would have been cannot be doubtful. He certainly was not in favour of a precipitate withdrawal, and he wrote that ‘ there could be no divorce between Egypt and the Soudan.’ His own view was to maintain the connexion. But he protested most warmly against the abandonment of the garrisons. We, and not the Khedive, were bound to stand by those who were supporting an administration with which we were identified. The following is only one of many indignant passages on the subject :—

‘ As for evacuation, it is one thing ; as for “ ratting out,” it is another. I am quite of advice as to No. 1 (as we have not the decision to keep

the country), but I will be no party to No. 2 (this "rat" business). First, because it is dishonourable; second, because it is not possible, (which will have more weight). Therefore, if it is going to be No. 2, the troops had better not come beyond Berber till the question of what will be done is settled.'

Another passage is as follows :—

"Enough for the day is the evil thereof," but I cannot help feeling appalled at what is to happen. Even if we do manage to extricate Khartoum from its troubles, we will have to quiet down all the countries around Senaar and Kassala, and to withdraw from the Bahr Gazelle and Equator. Then comes the question of whether the prisoners in Kordofan are to be left to their fate. If Her Majesty's Government has entered the field this is impossible; and if Her Majesty's Government prevent Egypt extricating them, then it is virtually Her Majesty's Government who leaves them to their fate. Besides this, there is the terrible outlay of money (which has to be met) for current expenses. Also, who is to govern the country? All idea of evacuation *en masse* must be given up; it is totally impossible: and the only solution is to let the Turks come in, or else to leave me here, the very thought of which makes me shudder.'

On October 5th he sums up the situation thus:—

'Let us consider dispassionately the state of affairs. Does Her Majesty's Government consider they are responsible for the extrication of the Soudan garrisons and Cairo inhabitants? We can only judge that Her Majesty's Government does recognise this responsibility, for otherwise why did they send me up, and why did they relieve Tokar? Once this responsibility is assumed, I see no outlet for it but to relieve the garrisons, *coûte que coûte*. It may be said that the object of the present expedition is for my relief personally; but how is it possible for me to go away and leave men whom I have egged on to fight for the last six months? How could I leave after encouraging Senaar to hold out? No one could possibly wish me to do so. No Government could take the responsibility of so ordering me. There is this difficulty. Perhaps it would be patriotic to bolt; but even if I could get my mind to do it, I doubt if it is possible to get my body out of this place. Had Baring said in March, "Shift for yourself as best as you can," which he could have done, the affair could have been arranged, and we could have bolted to the Equator; but if you look over my telegrams you will see I ask him what he will do, and he never answered. The people had not then endured any privation, and I was, as it were, not much engaged to them; but now it is different, especially as we have communicated with Senaar. No one can judge the waste of money and expense of

life in the present expedition—it is an utter waste of both—but it is simply due to the indecisions of our Government. Had they said from the first, “We do not care—we will do nothing for the garrisons of the Soudan—they may perish?” had they not relieved Tokar, had they not telegraphed to me as to the force to relieve me (*vide* telegrams May 5th from Souakim, April 29th from Massowah)? had they telegraphed (when Baring telegraphed to Cuzzi, March 29th, which arrived here saying, “No British troops are coming to Berber, negotiations going on about opening road—Graham was about to attack Osman Digna?”) “Shift for yourself!” why, nothing could have been said; but Her Majesty’s Government would not say they were going to abandon the garrisons, and therefore “Shift for yourself.” It is that which has hampered us so much. On the one hand, if I bolted I deserted them (Her Majesty’s Government); on the other hand, by staying I have brought about this expedition. Baring gave me distinct orders not to go to the Equator without the permission of Her Majesty’s Government. I do not question the policy of Her Majesty’s Government in not keeping the Soudan. It is a wretched country, and not worth keeping. I do not pretend even to judge the policy of letting the garrisons, &c., &c., perish; but I do say I think that Her Majesty’s Government ought to have taken the bold step of speaking out and saying, “Shift for yourself,” in March, when I could have done so, and not now, when I am in honour bound to the people after six months’ bothering warfare. Not only did Baring not say, “Shift for yourself,” but he put a veto upon my going to the Equator. I say this because no one can realise its difficulties better than myself; but, owing to what has passed, owing to indecision, we are in for it, and the only thing now to do is to see how to go out of it with honour and the least expense possible—and I see no other way than by giving the country to the Turks.’

Speaking again of the relief of Tokar, Gordon says:—

‘Had Baker been supported by, say 500 men, he would not have been defeated. Yet after he was defeated you go and send a force to relieve the town. Had Baker been supported by these 500 men, he would, in all probability, have been victorious, and would have pushed on to Berber once more, then Berber would not have perished. What was right to do in March was right to do in February. We sent an expedition in March, so we ought to have sent one in February; and the worst of it was that Baker having been defeated when you had sent your expedition to Tokar, Baker’s force no longer existed, and his guns were resisting me at Berber. It is a truly deplorable waste of men and money on account of our indecision.’

A few words may be said about the Stewart

incident. Gordon resolved to send the *Abbas* down, and upon his assuring Stewart, in reply to his inquiry, that he 'could go in honour,' Stewart left. Stewart asked for an order, but this Gordon refused, as he would not send them into any danger he did not share. It was, therefore, the wish of Stewart and Mr. Power to leave Khartoum and proceed down the Nile, and Gordon placed no restraint on their wish or judgment; and when they left he took every step in his power to provide for their security. He sent his river boats to escort them past Berber, and he gave them much advice, which, if it had been implicitly followed, should have brought them in safety to Dongola. Once reconciled to their departure and the despatch of some of his steamers northwards, he formed a plan for the co-operation of the latter with any expedition that might be sent to reopen communications with the capital of the Soudan. It has been shown how this was actually carried out; but it is impossible to doubt that, while thus endeavouring to facilitate the progress of the Expedition, Gordon seriously weakened his own position in Khartoum.

That these boats, each of which he considered worth two thousand men, had to run no inconsiderable danger is shown by the following extracts :—

'If any officer of the expedition is on board he will know what it is to be in a penny-boat under cannon-fire. The *Bordein* has come in : she has seven wounded. There are no Arabs at Shoooboaha or (consequently) guns ; the wounded were from two shells fired by the Arabs from Halfiyeh. The expeditionary force is at Ambukol (which is lively) ; the Arabs had four guns at Halfiyeh ; one woman was killed in the *Bordein*.'

The news of the loss of the *Abbas* was a terrible blow to Gordon, and although at the time he knew nothing certain as to the fate of those on board, yet he feared

treachery, though he could not believe the *Abbas* had struck on a rock ; for if so, why had not the two sailing boats which she had with her gone on? Many of Gordon's fears as to the ultimate fall of Khartoum and other events were prophetic; and although he did not foresee the exact circumstances of the loss of the *Abbas*, he did foresee the fate of Stewart and those with him, and he was never comfortable after their departure. After he heard that the *Abbas* had been captured, but had received no information as to the circumstances of the loss, he says :—

‘Stewart was a man who did not chew the cud, he never thought of danger in prospective; he was not a bit suspicious (while I am made up of it). I can see in imagination the whole scene, the Sheikh inviting them to land, saying, “Thank God, the Mahdi is a liar!”—bringing in wood—men going on shore and dispersed. The *Abbas* with her steam down, then a rush of wild Arabs and all is over!’

* * * * *

‘It is very sad, but being ordained, we must not murmur,’ and ‘I dare not, with my views, say their death is an evil.’

The variety of Gordon's ideas, military, political, and humorous, is forcibly illustrated throughout the journals. Now he is describing a battle with clearness and graphic power, now he is criticising a Government or a Minister, and now and again he is indulging his love of fun—at one time in pure jest, and at others in brilliant satire.

Speaking of the tendency of his men to duck their heads in order to avoid the Arab rifle fire, he says :—

‘In the Crimea it was supposed and considered mean to bob, and one used to try and avoid it. — used to say “It is all well enough for you, but I am a family man,” and he used to bob at every report. For my part I think judicious bobbing is not a fault, for I remember seeing on two occasions shells before my eyes, which certainly had I not bobbed would have taken off my head. And a good riddance too, F. O. would say.’

The imaginary report of a question and answer in the House of Lords on the subject of affairs in the Soudan reads like an extract from the parliamentary columns of a daily newspaper. 'His Lordship (in reply) deprecated the frequent questioning on subjects which, as his Lordship had said, he knew nothing about, and further did not care to know anything about.'

There are, of course, many passages referring to his relations with Sir Evelyn Baring. Among them is the following :—'Baring deigned to say he would support me. Of course, it was an enormous assistance to have his approbation.' But the most graphic of the allusions refers to Mr. Egerton. The following passage is one among many ironical pieces of writing with which Gordon endeavoured to while away the time:—

'I am sure I should like that fellow Egerton: there is a light-hearted jocularity about his communications, and I should think the cares of life sat easily on him. He wishes to know *exactly* "day, hour, and minute" that he (Gordon) expects to be in difficulties as to provisions and ammunition. Now, I really think if Egerton was to turn over the "archives" (a delicious word) of his office he would see we had been in difficulties for provisions for some months. It is as if a man on the bank, having seen his friend in the river already bobbed down two or three times, hails, "I say, old fellow, let us know when we are to throw you the life-buoy. I know you have bobbed down two or three times, but it is a pity to throw you the life-buoy until you really are *in extremis*, and I want to know *exactly*, for I am a man brought up in a school of exactitude, though I did *forget* (?) to date my June telegram about *that Bedouin escort contract*.''

One of the most amusing passages of Gordon's Journal is that in which he says, not without apparently good reason, 'I must say I hate our diplomatists.' Here follows a rough sketch of two figures, one representing Sir Evelyn Baring, and the other Mr. Egerton, his assistant in Cairo. The former is represented as saying, 'Most serious, is it not? He called us hum-

bugs,—arrant humbugs.' Egerton is made to reply, 'I can't believe it; it's too dreadful.' Gordon with characteristic candour, continues, referring to diplomatists in general, 'I think with few exceptions they are arrant humbugs, and I expect they know it.'

The foregoing is accompanied by one of the many extracts from the Scriptures, which abound. It is as follows:—'Blessed is the man who does not sit in the seat of the scornful,' (Ps. i. 1.)

There is less in the Diary than might have been expected of personal attack on the Government which sent Gordon to Khartoum. He says, indeed:—

'I could write volumes of pent-up wrath on this subject if I did not believe things are ordained and work for the best. I am not at all inclined to order half rations with a view to any prolongation of our blockade; if I did so it would probably end in a catastrophe before the time when, if full rations are given, we should have exhausted our supplies. I should be an angel (which I am not, needless to say) if I was not rabid with Her Majesty's Government; but I hope I may be quiet on the subject of this Soudan and Cairo business, with its indecision; but to lose all my beautiful black soldiers is enough to make one angry with them who have the direction of our future.'

The only explicit mention of Mr. Gladstone by name is given in the following passages:—

'Sept. 26.—Man proposes, God disposes. Any one, who two and a half years ago had said that the Gladstone Ministry would not only go to Egypt, and, not content with one expedition to Soudan (Graham's), would go in for two expeditions, would have been scouted as a madman; and it certainly is curious that Mr. Gladstone, in the *Nineteenth Century Review* of 1878, combatting Mr. Dicey's ideas for the annexation of Egypt, should have stated that the annexation was impossible on account of the Soudan.'

'Mr. Gladstone has a rival up here in shirt-collars—Mahomed Bey Ibrahim appeared to-day with regular wings, rather ragged, his collars up to his ears, regular orthodox patterns.'

In another passage Gordon says:—

'Man is essentially a treacherous animal, and although the Psalmist said in his haste, "All men are liars," I think he might have said the same in his leisure.'

Hearing the news that to prevent outrage the Roman Catholic nuns at Obeid had been compelled to declare themselves married to the Greek priests, Gordon remarks, 'What a row the Pope will make about the nuns marrying the Greeks; it is the union of the Greek and Latin Churches.'

On the 23rd of September Gordon says, that from March 12 till 22nd September, the garrison had expended 3,240,770 Remington cartridges, 1570 Krupp cartridges, and 9442 mountain-gun cartridges. He calculated that of the Remington cartridges perhaps 240,000 had been captured by the enemy, so that the number fired away would be three millions. As the rebels lost perhaps 1000 in all, he reckons that each man killed required 3000 cartridges. He also remarked, 'Looking at the Arab gunners with my telescope, they never seem to bother themselves about aim, but just to load and fire.'

Gordon's own men were firing away more than 40,000 rounds of ammunition a-day, so they were probably equally indifferent about their aim.

Speaking of the Mahdi, Gordon says:—

'The Greek told the Greek Consul that the Mahdi was perplexed to know what on earth I was doing up here, as I had no part or lot in the Soudan. I expect this question is more perplexing for others than the Mahdi (myself excluded). I must confess that the pepper business has sickened me: I had hitherto hoped I had to do with a regular fanatic who believed in his mission, but when one comes to pepper in the finger-nails it is rather humiliating to have to succumb to him, and somehow I have the belief that I shall not have to do so. One cannot help being amused at this pepper business. Those who come in for pardon come in on their knees with a halter round their neck. The Mahdi rises, having scratched his eyes and obtained a copious flow of tears, and takes off the halter. As the production of tears is generally considered the proof of sincerity, I would recommend the Mahdi's recipe to Cabinet Ministers for justifying some job.'

On October the 24th, on the subject of the Relief

Expedition, Gordon wrote, 'If they do not come,' he says, 'before the 30th November the game is up, and Rule Britannia.' And then comes the following paragraph, in characteristic style:—

'I dwell on the joy of never seeing Great Britain again, with its horrid, wearisome dinner-parties and miseries. How we can put up with those things passes my imagination! It is a perfect bondage. At those dinner-parties we are all in masks, saying what we do not believe, eating and drinking things we do not want, and then abusing one another. I would sooner live like a dervish with the Mahdi than go out to dinner every night in London. I hope, if any English General comes to Khartoum, he will not ask me to dinner. Why men cannot be friends without bringing the wretched stomachs in is astounding.'

Throughout the Journals reference is occasionally made to various important documents, and these are given in the appendix to the published Journals. Among them are several letters of high interest which passed between Gordon, and various influential natives, such as Abdel Kader, the Mudir at Senaar, and the Sheikh Abderrahman en Nagosmi. But most notable of all is a letter from the Mahdi to Gordon, dated 2nd of Moharem, 1302 (October 22, 1884). In it the writer tells of the loss of the *Abbas*, saying that 'the steamer and all that was in it have fallen a prey to the Moslems, and we have taken knowledge of all the letters and telegrams which were in it, in Arabic and in Frankish, and of the maps, which were opened to us by those on whom God has bestowed His gifts.' The Mahdi then refers *seriatim* to the contents of the letters and despatches, and to 'two seals engraved with our name to imitate our seal.' And then he continues:—'We never miss any of your news, nor what is in your innermost thoughts, and about the strength and support—not of God—on which you rely. We have now understood it all.' But—

'Notwithstanding all this we have now arrived at Mushra'-el-Koweh', at a day's journey from Omdurman, and are coming, please God, to your place. If you return to the Most High God, and become a Moslem, and surrender to His order and that of His Prophet, and believe in us as the Mahdi, send us a message after laying down your arms and giving up the thought of fighting, so that I may send you one with safe-conduct, by which you will obtain (assurance of) benefit of the blessing in this world and the next. Otherwise, and if you do not act thus, you will have to encounter war from God and His Prophet. And know that the Most High God is mighty for your destruction, as He has destroyed (others) before you, who were much stronger than you, and more numerous.'

In reply Gordon sent a telegram to the Commandant of Omdurman, to be communicated to the Mahdi, with the memorable words which in the original Arabic make a rhymed couplet (either by accident or design), 'I am here like iron, and hope to see the newly-arrived English.'

On November the 8th, an entry occurs which is one of the most just comments on the policy and declarations of the Government then in office which it is possible to conceive.

'Another soldier has come in ; he says the Mahdi thought Khartoum could be bombarded from his new camp, but finds it cannot be done. If Lord Wolseley did say he hoped to relieve Khartoum before "many months" he must have a wonderful confidence in our powers of endurance, considering that when he is said to have made this utterance we had been blockaded six and a half months, and we are now in our ninth month. I am quite sure of one thing, that the policy followed up till lately (and the policy which may be carried out, of abandoning Senaar, &c.), is one which will act detrimentally on our army, for what officer, if he was in a fortress, could have any confidence that it might not be thought advisable to abandon him ?'

And then the writer, a few lines lower down, expresses the difficulty of avoiding a doubt as to the real view which the Government would take of the fall of Khartoum. And, as to the abandonment, he says :—

'If a boy at Eton or Harrow acted towards his fellow in a similar way I think he would be kicked ; and I am sure he would deserve it.'

I know of no sort of parallel to all this in history, except it be David with Uriah the Hittite, and then there was an Eve in the case, who I am not aware exists in this case. Remember, also, I do not judge the question of abandoning the garrison or not; what I judge is the indecision of Government.'

On the 12th November there was an engagement between Gordon's steamers and the rebels; it is thus described :—

'10.20 a.m.—For half-an-hour firing lulled, but then recommenced, and is still going on. The *Ismailia* was struck with a shell, but I hear is not seriously damaged. The *Husseinyeh* is aground (I feel much the want of my other steamers at Metammeh). 11.15 a.m.—Firing has lulled; it was very heavy for the last three-quarters of an hour from *Ismailia* and Arabs. It is now desultory, and is dying away. *Husseinyeh* is still aground; the *Ismailia* is at anchor. What a six-hours anxiety for me when I saw the shells strike the water near the steamers from the Arabs; imagine my feelings! We have 831*l.* in specie, and 42,800*l.* in paper, and there is 14,600*l.* in paper out in the town. I call this state of finance not bad, after more than eight months' blockade. The troops are owed half a-month's pay, and even that can be scarcely called owed them, for I have given them stores, and beyond the regulations. Noon.—The firing has ceased, I am glad to say. I have lived years in these last hours! Had I lost the *Ismailia* I should have lost the *Husseinyeh* (aground), and then Omdurman and the North Fort, and then the town. One p.m.—The Arabs are firing on the steamers with their two guns. The *Husseinyeh* still aground; that is the reason of it. 1.30 p.m.—Now has ceased. The *Ismailia*, struck by three shells, had one man killed, fifteen wounded, on board of her; she did really very well. This is our first encounter with the Mahdi's personal troops. 2.45 p.m.—The *Ismailia* tried to take *Husseinyeh* off and got struck twice, in addition to the three times before mentioned, with shells, so she desisted from the attempt. The Arabs are firing on the *Husseinyeh*. I have ordered the Krupp of *Mogrim* to play on the Arab guns, and shall wait till night to take off the *Husseinyeh*. She is nearer to the left bank than to the right bank. It is not clear if she is aground or half sunk (equally a trouble). 3.30 p.m.—The Arabs are bringing their guns nearer to the aground or half-sunken *Husseinyeh*. The *Ismailia* reports that the two last shells have done her no material damage. 4.30 p.m.—The Arabs have now three guns bearing on the *Husseinyeh*. Six p.m.—The firing has ceased. I hope to get the *Husseinyeh* off to-night. Seven p.m.—The Arabs keep up a dropping fire on the *Husseinyeh*, who, I hear, has two shell holes in her, and has six men, including the captain, wounded. I must say the Arabs to-day showed the greatest pluck; over and over again they returned to the

attack, though overwhelmed with the musketry fire of the castellated *Ismailia*. I think they must have lost heavily, for at times they were in dense groups. I believe that by the Arabs we may understand *our own regulars captured in Kordofan and Darfur, &c.* We are going to get the *Husseinyeh* off to-night *if we can*. No Royal Navy vessel would have behaved better than the *Ismailia* to-day. She passed and repassed the Arab guns upwards of twenty times, when any one well-placed shell would have sunk her.'

Of the black troops he always speaks with pride and affection; but with regard to the fellaheen soldiers on board the steamers he writes as follows:—

'October 19.—I hope it will be remembered that, with respect to white troops (fellaheen) on board the four steamers now at Metammeh, I make you a handsome present of them (officers and all), and request that if you use the steamers you will disembark those men and take them on your list, for we never wish to see them up here again. *You will be carrying out the evacuation policy!* If you do not use the steamers please send them back *empty of those fellaheen people*, but send me *their rifles*. You will soon have a fine contingent, for I have everything ready for a general discharge of Cairo *débris* the moment I hear you are really at Berber. . . . I hope it will be an understood thing that every Egyptian soldier you find belongs to you, and that you will not send him back to me.'

This note on the renegade Slatin reveals Gordon's character at a stroke. There is the scorn of human treachery, there is the pity of human weakness recorded with a power of humour difficult to surpass:—

'October 16.—Slatin's letter to Austrian Consul contains the remark that "if he comes over to me I must promise never to surrender the city, as he would *then suffer terrible tortures and death*." He evidently is not a Spartan; he also says that "he changed his religion because he had not had much attention paid to his religious belief when young." If he gets away I shall take him to the Congo with me. He will want some *quarantine*. One feels sorry for him.'

The following are some of the later incidents of the siege:—

'He writes on November 22, I am terribly anxious for the fort at Omdurman, and am trying to devise some means of occupying the

Arabs and diverting their attention elsewhere. Omdurman Fort signals they are all right; they had another man wounded. Up to date we have had passing through hospital 242 wounded. We have had some 1800 to 1900 killed (between 17th March and 22nd November). This is the present state of affairs. The Arab camps are about five miles from the city.'

'*December 5.*—According to the men who came in from the Arabs, it is the pet detachment of the Mahdi who are opposite the Palace; they do not number more than one hundred, and are principally our Soudan soldiers. I have almost given up all idea of saving the town; it is a last resource this attempt we make to open the route to the Omdurman Fort.'

'*December 6.*—I have given up all idea of landing at Omdurman; we have not the force to do it. The Arabs fired forty-five rounds from their guns at Mogrim and the steamers. We had two men wounded at Mogrim and one killed. This is most distressing to have these poor fellows wounded and killed.'

'*December 13.*—The steamers went up and attacked Arabs at Bourré. Certainly this day-after-day delay has a most disheartening effect on every one. To-day is the 276th day of our anxiety. The Arabs appear by all accounts to have suffered to-day heavily at Bourré. We had none wounded by the Arabs; but one man, by the discharge of a bad cartridge, got a cut in neck; this was owing to the same cause as nearly blew out my eyes the other day. We are going to send down the *Bordein* the day after to-morrow, and with her I shall send this journal. If some effort is not made before ten days' time the town will fall. It is inexplicable this delay. If the expeditionary forces have reached the river and met my steamers, one hundred men are all that we require, just to show themselves. I send this journal, for I have little hopes of saving it if the town falls. I put in (Appendix E. F.) the sort of arrangement I would make with Zubehr Pasha for the future government of the Soudan. Ferratch [Farag?] Pasha is really showing an amount of vigour I did not give him credit for. Even if the town falls under the nose of the expeditionary force, it will not, in my opinion, justify the abandonment of Senaar, and Kassala, or of the Equatorial Province, by Her Majesty's Government. All that is absolutely necessary is for fifty of the expeditionary force to get on board a steamer and come up to Halfiyeh, and thus let their presence be felt; this is not asking much, but it must happen at once, or it will (as usual) be too late. A soldier deserted to the Arabs to-day from the North Fort. The buglers on the roof, being short of stature, are put on boxes to enable them to fire over the parapet; one with the recoil of rifle was knocked right over, and caused considerable excitement. We thought he was killed by the noise he made in his fall. The Arabs fired their Krupps continually into the town from the south front, but no one takes any notice of it. The Arabs at Goba only fired one shell

at the Palace to-day, which burst in the air. December 14.—Arabs fired two shells at the Palace this morning: 546 ardebs dhooora in store; also 83,525 oke of biscuit. 10.30 a.m.—The steamers are down at Omdurman engaging the Arabs. Consequently I am on "tenterhooks." 11.30 a.m.—Steamers returned. The *Bordein* was struck by a shell in her battery. We had only one man wounded. We are going to send down the *Bordein* to-morrow with this journal. If I was in command of the two hundred men of the expeditionary force, which are all that is necessary for the movement, I should stop just below Halfieeh and attack the Arabs at that place before I came on here to Khartoum. I should then communicate with the North Fort, and act according to circumstances. Now, mark this, if the expeditionary force—and I ask for no more than two hundred men—does not come in ten days the town may fall, and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye.

'C. G. GORDON.'

It is impossible to read these daily entries in his diary without feeling the liveliest emotion for his sufferings, and for the neglect of which he was the victim. Had his vigour been imitated by the Government Khartoum would never have fallen.

'I have done my best for the honour of our country,' are the last words in Gordon's diary; and in his last letter to his sister he wrote, 'Like Lawrence, I have tried to do my duty.' It is impossible to add force to those simple farewell sentences of the man who so long held the attention of the world riveted upon him, and who supported, unaided and alone, the highest traditions of English courage and fortitude. The story of the siege and defence of Khartoum will live for ever in the graphic words of its defender.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETREAT FROM GUBAT.

Affairs at Metammeh—General Buller takes command—Retreat decided on—General Buller's Force—Arrival at Abu Klea—Attack on the Position—The Repulse—Buller's Losses—Arrival of Reinforcements—The Evacuation of Abu Klea—Arrival at Gakdul—Death of General Stewart—Departure for Korti.

THE result of the taking of Khartoum was naturally to increase the renown of the Mahdi to a greater extent than ever in the Moslem world. His fame as a conqueror spread not only throughout the Soudan, but also in the towns and villages of Upper and Lower Egypt. Many of those who before had disbelieved in him now became fully assured of his holy mission. Had he at once followed up his success by an advance down the Nile, the consequences to the British forces at Gubat and elsewhere might have been most disastrous. As it was, he seems to have contented himself with staying with his followers in the neighbourhood of Khartoum, the pillaging of which no doubt afforded an agreeable relaxation after a long and arduous siege.

During the absence of Sir Charles Wilson, the British force in the neighbourhood of Gubat under Colonel Boscawen, employed themselves in improving and strengthening the works there. A triangular fort was erected, and earthworks with flanking trenches and parapets were thrown up both on the land side and towards Metammeh. Brushwood and wire entanglements were placed outside to impede the enemy in the event of his

attempting to storm the position, and in fact, every preparation was made to stand a siege.

The force at Abu Kru and Gubat from time to time sent convoys of sick and wounded back across the desert to Abu Klea and Korti. To facilitate and guard the line of communications, the garrisons at the Wells were strengthened from time to time by detachments from Korti.

The whole country round Metammeh, except the village itself, where 2000 to 3000 of the enemy were quartered, remained quiet. At Metammeh, on the 28th January, there had been a great firing of guns and other signs of rejoicing over the news from Khar-toum.

On intelligence of General Stewart's condition, reaching head-quarters, Sir Redvers Buller was appointed to succeed to the command of the Desert column. Sir Evelyn Wood becoming Lord Wolsley's Chief of the Staff, and Brigadier-General Grenfell succeeding Sir Evelyn Wood as Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian army.

Buller left Korti on the 29th January by the Desert route. The Royal Irish and West Kent Regiments left at the same time to strengthen the garrisons at the Wells and reinforce Gubat.

On the 11th a convoy arrived with General Buller and six companies of the Royal Irish regiment, which had marched the whole way from Korti. On the 13th Buller evacuated the position.

His original instructions were to seize Metammeh and march on Berber, and for this purpose arrangements had been made to reinforce the column with the Royal Irish Regiment and the Light Camel Corps.

This programme, however, was suddenly altered, and in lieu of a fresh advance, a general retreat was

decided on. One reason for this change was the loss likely to be incurred in the taking of Metammeh, another consideration was the insufficiency of Buller's column to operate against Berber in the face of the large force, which, set free by the fall of Khartoum, the Mahdi would now have had at his disposal.

It was felt unwise even to attempt to hold the position at Gubat against the Mahdi's army reinforced as it would be by Gordon's captured soldiers, and supplied with the captured arms and ammunition taken at Khartoum. Reports of the Mahdi having commenced an advance with 50,000 men had been received, and although there was not much dependence to be placed on such information, it was judged best to retire and so avoid the risk of having the retreat cut off.

Under these circumstances preparations were made for the march back across the Bayuda desert.*

Before leaving, Gordon's two remaining steamers were rendered useless by removal of parts of the machinery.

Buller's force numbered nearly 1600 rank and file, and consisted of the following corps:—Squadron of 19th Hussars, Naval Brigade with two Gardner machine-guns, detachment of Royal Artillery, with two guns, a portion of the Mounted Infantry, a portion of the Guards Camel Corps, a wing of the Heavy Cavalry Camel Corps, portions of the Sussex and Royal Irish Regiments, details from departmental corps, and 300 Soudanese.

The wounded were the first sent off, the escort of 300 men being placed under the command of Colonel Talbot. The bad cases were carried in litters by the Egyptians. Sir Herbert Stewart, by this time much changed for the worse, was among the sick.

* Sir C. Wilson and Stuart Wortley had left for Korti on the 5th.

On the march to Abu Klea Buller met with no opposition beyond a skirmish which the advanced guard had on the day of starting.

On the 16th the column arrived at Abu Klea, and at once set to work to strengthen the position there.

About thirty of the enemy's cavalry were seen scouting round the place all day. About an hour before sunset these were reinforced by some 400 infantry armed with rifles. They crossed the hills to the north-east and eastward, and having made a cover by throwing up a series of low stone walls, opened a well-directed fire at long range on the camp. The bullets fell all round and over the position. No lights or fires were allowed after dark, as the enemy kept up a dropping fire throughout the night. The English force made no reply. Up to the morning of the 17th, two men had been killed, and four officers and ten men wounded. On the 17th the screw-guns opened fire on the enemy's position with shrapnel. The Gardners were also turned on, but as the supply of ammunition was limited, the fire had to be restricted. Still, slow as was the fire, it sufficed to check that of the enemy until eight a.m., when the cover they had been throwing up being completed, their fire became as heavy as before. Fortunately, the aim was somewhat interfered with by the high wind blowing, and by clouds of sand. Still, as Buller in his despatch to Lord Wolseley observed, to remain stationary subject to this unceasing pelting by bullets 'was annoying.'

The fire of the enemy did not interfere with the work of strengthening the camp. Three new forts mutually supporting one another were constructed.

Buller placed the command of the principal and largest of them in the hands of Lord Charles Beresford, with his naval men and guns. The Royal Irish

Regiment were ordered to hold the fort on the west of the camp, while the Sussex men garrisoned the fort on the east. The Engineers guarded the zeriba itself, in which the hospital was erected.

About noon a steady shelling of the enemy's position was commenced. The Gardner guns were at the same time again brought into use, and the Mounted Infantry also opened fire with their Martinis.

After about two hours of this long range fighting, the enemy's fire showed signs of slackening. Major Wardrop was then sent out to reconnoitre, and endeavoured to ascertain the actual strength and position of the enemy, up to this time unknown.

With one officer and three troopers Major Wardrop crept round the enemy's right, under cover of some rising ground. Ascending a slight rise, he looked cautiously over, and observed that the enemy's riflemen on the hill were not numerous, and had no supports of spearmen. He dismounted his men, and made them, without showing more than their heads, fire a volley. He then remounted and galloped off and repeated his tactics two or three times in different places, leaving one man in each place to fire as rapidly as possible, but without exposing himself to view. The Arabs were completely deceived by this manœuvre, and, imagining that large reinforcements of British troops had come up, became demoralised, broke off the fight, and retreated towards Metammeh, carrying with them their killed and wounded, and only leaving a few mounted scouts to watch the camp.

Buller's loss in this skirmish amounted to three men killed, and four officers and twenty-three men wounded.

The enemy's losses were more severe. They were seen to carry off several bodies, and they left six on the field of battle. Owing to the nature of the ground it

was impossible to form an estimate as to the strength of the enemy. Equally difficult was it to understand what their object was, but the better opinion seems to be that it was intended to try and engage Buller until the Mahdi should come up with his whole army.

It was remarked that the empty cartridge-cases and the uniforms showed that the attacking force was from Khartoum. The tactics adopted also showed that they were those of a disciplined and well-drilled force.

Buller sent off a detachment of the Light Camel Corps, with despatches for Gakdul, requesting that transport camels with ammunition might be sent to him. His reasons for thus weakening his forces were twofold. In the first place, the water supply at Abu Klea was not sufficient for the whole force for many days. In the second, his means of transport were insufficient for the requirements of the marching column, in addition to those of the garrison at the Wells.

The night of the 17th was passed quietly at the camp. On the morning of the 18th Buller detached a party of infantry which moved southwards towards the hills which had been occupied by the enemy. Their position was found to be completely abandoned, and was taken possession of by the British force. A strong post was established on the principal hill, and scouting-parties were sent out, but nothing more could be seen of the enemy.

Sir Evelyn Wood, with three companies of the West Kent Regiment, was despatched from Korti to strengthen the force at Gakdul Wells, which they reached on the 17th. From Gakdul a supply of transport camels was sent forward to Buller at Abu Klea.

The Light Camel Corps and a convoy of stores arrived at Abu Klea from Gakdul on February the 20th. The stores were beginning to be needed.

During the march from Gakdul nothing was seen of the enemy until the neighbourhood of Abu Klea was reached. 'A halt had been called for the purpose of grazing the camels, when suddenly a small body of armed rebels was observed watching the movements of the convoy. Some of the Camel Corps forthwith went after the enemy, and, after a smart chase, captured a half-dozen. These made no attempt to resist capture, but threw down their Remingtons, and begged for mercy. When interrogated the prisoners declared that there was no strong force of rebels anywhere near. There was, they said, a rebel camp some two miles distant, but there were only 600 fighting men there, all of whom had recently come from Metammeh. The rebel camp was situated on rising ground, fortified roughly, and defended by one gun brought from Metammeh. The prisoners agreed in stating that none of the Mahdi's forces from Khartoum had yet reached Metammeh.'

On the arrival of the camels and stores from Gakdul, Buller made his preparations for evacuating Abu Klea. His original intentions were to destroy the forts, and leave the wells untouched. But on the forenoon of the 23rd, he received information to the effect that the enemy had received a strong reinforcement, estimated at not less than 8000 men. This compelled him to modify his plans, and he resolved to leave the forts standing, but to fill up all the larger wells.

The latter step was afterwards much criticised, and can only be justified by the extreme peril in which Buller's force would otherwise have been placed. To stop up a desert well is to the Oriental mind about the blackest crime that could be committed; and is a measure which is never adopted even in the most savage warfare. Buller, however, had no alternative. The

absence of water in his rear was the sole thing that could check pursuit by the overwhelming force in his rear. It was, in short, the only method, and, as the result showed, an effective one of covering his retreat. Accordingly, regardless of Eastern traditions, heaps of stones and rubbish were piled into all the principal wells before leaving. It was foreseen that before the enemy could advance, he must lose several hours, and perhaps days, in restoring the wells to their former state. This time Buller calculated on employing well in getting a start over his pursuers.

At two p.m. all the baggage was sent on under convoy to camp on the Omit Handel plain out of gunshot range of the Abu Klea hills.

At six the outposts were withdrawn, and an hour later the whole force, including thirty-two sick and wounded, was in retreat towards Gakdul. As they marched out, the force was not interfered with by the enemy. The enemy's scouts appeared about midday on the 24th, and fired a few shots. After this they retired, and the column was no more molested, reaching Gakdul on the 26th.

There being barely sufficient camels for the supplies, all the men and officers had to march on foot. This, as Buller observed in his despatch, in the weather which prevailed, with an allowance of only three quarts of water per man a-day, was most exhausting. He adds, 'Nothing could have been better than the spirit shown by all ranks.'

At Gakdul Buller's force learned the news of the death on the 16th of their former leader, General Stewart, who, with the other wounded, had been sent on in advance. The latest accounts of his condition had been such as to lead to hope of his recovery. It subsequently transpired, however, that the nature of the wound he had received

rendered this impossible, and after supporting the hardships of the desert march he finally succumbed the day before the convoy reached the wells of Gakdul.*

The column remained but a brief period at Gakdul, and on the 27th set out for Korti, which was reached on the 1st March.

Of the march of Stewart's column across the Bayuda desert to Metammeh and back, it is unnecessary to say anything more. The highest military authority in Europe† said of the men who took part in it, 'They were not soldiers but heroes.'

* Major General Sir Herbert Stewart was born in 1843, and was one of the youngest generals in the service; he was an Ensign in 1863, a Lieut.-Colonel in 1881, and after twenty years' service, all told, and when barely forty-two, was a Brigadier General. He had seen a great deal of Staff service in India and at home, was Adjutant and Quartermaster General to the ill-fated Colley on Majuba Hill; he came under Lord Wolseley's personal observation in the Zulu War, where he was constantly employed—first, as Brigade-Major of cavalry, and then as Chief of the Staff to Baker Russell in the storming of Sekukuni's stronghold, and became Wolseley's military Secretary and Chief of the Staff when winding up the Zulu campaign.

One of the earliest appointments made on the organization of the army for the first Egyptian campaign was that of Stewart as Staff officer to Sir Drury-Lowe, who was to command the cavalry division, and Stewart was one of Wolseley's most active and trusted counsellors in making the preparations for that expedition. He distinguished himself at Tel-el-Kebir, and took part in General Drury-Lowe's brilliant ride to Cairo. When the Egyptians sent out a white flag to meet the advancing British force, General (then Colonel) Stewart at the head of a few Lancers and Dragoons, demanded, and received, the surrender of the Egyptians at Abbasieh. He accompanied General Graham to Souakim, and displayed conspicuous soldierly qualities at Tamaai, where his horsemen did much to retrieve the fortunes of the day when Davis's square broke beneath the Arab charge.

† Count von Moltke.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NILE COLUMN.

The Nile Column—General Earle's Departure for Hamdab—The Force reaches Berti—The Battle of Kirbekan—Official Report—The Enemy's Losses—The Ammunition expended—Number of the Enemy's Forces—Death of General Earle—The Advance continued—Occupation of Salamat—The Scene of Stewart's Murder—Return of the Column—Arrival at Marawi—The Journey to Korti—Observations on the Expedition.

THE advanced guard of the Nile column, consisting of 545 of the South Staffordshire Regiment, left Korti for Abu Hamid in the whalers on the 28th December, 1884. Brigadier-General Brackenbury, second in command with a troop of the 19th Hussars, followed the next day.

On the 3rd January, 1885, the advanced guard encamped at Hamdab, where General Earle and his staff arrived on the 4th. The remainder of the column was sent forward from time to time, as the regiments reached Korti.

On the 24th the force at Hamdab, having been in the meantime joined by the Black Watch, a portion of the Gordon Highlanders, the whole of the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment, the Transport Camels and the Camel Battery, left camp and continued the journey up stream, the mounted troops proceeding along the banks, and the remainder going in the whalers as before. The enemy being reported to be in force at Berti, every precaution was taken to avoid a surprise, zeribas being formed each night, and a system of moonlight signalling was adopted.

Berti was reached by the advance guard on the 1st February and found deserted. The enemy, according to the report of a deserter, had abandoned the place on the previous day, and retired up the river to Salamat. Suleiman Wad Gamr, the murderer of Colonel Stewart's party it was reported, had fled beyond recall. The boat belonging to Stewart's steamer was discovered on the shore. Hussein Ismael, the stoker, whose account of the murder has been already given, presented himself and confirmed his previous story. The houses in Berti being searched, traces of Stewart's party were found in the shape of a number of papers, fragments of books, and a portion of a barometer.

On the 3rd the head-quarters moved to Berti, where the rest of the troops encamped as they came up. On the 4th news was received of the fall of Khartoum by a telegram from Sir Evelyn Wood. The same message instructed General Earle to halt where he was until further orders. On the 8th the General was informed by telegraph that Lord Wolseley was communicating with the Government as to future operations, but that the column was to push on to Abu Hamid. Orders for the troops to move up were at once issued.

General Brackenbury's account of the movements of the troops on the 8th and 9th, and of the action which took place on the 10th is as follows :—

‘On the night of the 8th instant General Earle received a report from Colonel Butler, who was in command of the advanced camp, that, in reconnoitring that day, he had found the enemy in a strong position, occupying some rocky knolls (or koppies), and holding a high razor-backed ridge of hills behind. Major-General Earle then ordered the advance of the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire and 1st Battalion Royal Highlanders in boats to an open camping-ground which Colonel Butler had selected, about a mile short of the enemy's position, and ordered the squadron 19th Hussars, half of the Egyptian Camel Corps, and two guns of the Egyptian artillery, to advance to the same place.

' On the 9th instant Major-General Earle himself arrived here, and having personally reconnoitred the enemy's position, and sent Colonel Butler to make a wide reconnaissance towards the enemy's rear, he decided, upon receipt of Colonel Butler's report, to attack the enemy's position this morning in the manner in which the advance was made to-day.

' A company of the Royal Highlanders was left in a strong zeriba to guard the boats, baggage, baggage animals, and all unarmed men, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Eden, 1st Battalion Royal Highlanders, with Major Sandwith, D.A.A.G., as his staff officer.

' Two companies of the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and two guns were placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Alleyne, A.A.G., who was instructed to take up a position on a rocky knoll in front of the enemy's position and occupy his attention in front, while with six companies of the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and six companies of the 1st Battalion Royal Highlanders, Major-General Earle marched about a mile and a half to his right front, completely turning the high ridge and the whole of the enemy's position.

' From this point the column marched under fire from the high ridge over broken and rocky ground; then pivoting on the left the right of the column was brought round till it faced the rear of the enemy's position. It was found that the column formation, ready to form square, was unsuited to the nature of the ground, and the advance was made by companies, but not in extended order; and points of vantage in the rocky ground were occupied in succession.

' Sending two companies of the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire about 9 a.m. to take the high ridge by working up its shoulder, Major-General Earle directed the right of the Black Watch to advance under cover of the river bank, and take the knoll (koppie) nearest the river. This was successfully done, and the main koppie was thus enfiladed.

' The remainder of the Black Watch then advanced from one rocky knoll to another towards the rear of the position. At this time a considerable body of the enemy rushed down from their position towards the Black Watch, who, without altering their formation, received them with admirable coolness, and killing many, completely turned them. A few only reached the river and escaped.

' The Black Watch, under Colonel Green, then advanced, with pipes playing, and stormed the main koppie from front and flank most gallantly, killing everyone of the enemy, who were in great numbers among the rocks and boulders.

' At this time Major-General Earle, who had accompanied the advance up the koppie, was killed by a bullet, fired from a stone hut in which several men had taken refuge.

' Meanwhile, the two companies of the South Staffordshire sent to take the high ridge had been received by a heavy fire; Lieutenant-Colonel Eyre had been killed, and their ammunition was exhausted.

I therefore, on assuming command, directed Lieutenant-Colonel Beal to reinforce the attack and take the ridge. The operation was performed with skill and courage, and the enemy were driven from their last position by 1.30 p.m.

‘Most of the enemy were armed with Remington rifles, and their position, which was a formidable one, was defended with desperate courage. After guiding the column to the rear of the enemy’s position, Colonel Butler made a wide sweeping movement to the rear with the Cavalry and captured the enemy’s camp, taking eight standards. Two also fell into our hands on the main koppie. In the pursuit by the cavalry some of the enemy were killed, and the survivors only escaped by swimming the river.

‘It is difficult to estimate the enemy’s numbers in the field, or the number of his dead; but the lowest estimate I can make of his killed is 200. They lay thick in every nook and crevice of the koppie, and on the open ground, where they tried to rush through our troops; and the Staffordshire killed many at the main ridge of hills. Prisoners report that the three chiefs in command were killed, viz., Moussa Wad Abu Hegal, Ali Wad Hussein, cousin, and Ahmed Lekalik, brother of Abdul Majid Wad Abu Lekalik. Our own loss was as follows:—

‘Killed: Major-General Earle.

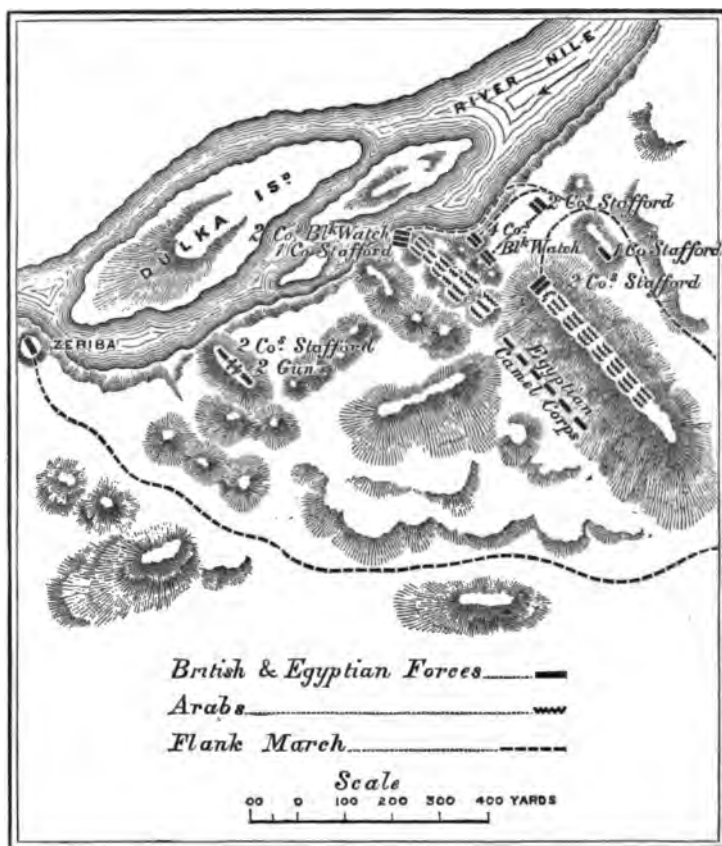
‘1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.—Killed: Lieut.-Colonel Eyre and three privates. Wounded: Captain Horsbrugh (severely); Lieutenant the Hon. J. G. R. U. Colborne (severely); twenty non-commissioned officers and men.

‘1st Royal Highlanders.—Killed: Lieut.-Colonel Coveney and four non-commissioned officers and men. Wounded: Lieut.-Colonel Wauchope (very severely); Lieutenant D. Kennedy (severely); and eighteen non-commissioned officers and men. Missing: one private.

‘Egyptian Camel Corps.—Killed: two privates. Wounded: one private.

‘The column will continue its advance to-morrow, and I shall endeavour to carry out your orders, with which Major-General Earle had made me fully acquainted.’

As indicated in the report, General Earle’s tactics were to keep the enemy amused by Colonel Alleyne’s force in front, whilst Colonel Butler, with the main body, by a march to the right, turned the position and attacked it in the rear. The advance was commenced at seven a.m., and fire was opened by the two companies of the South Staffordshire Regiment, and the guns under Colonel Alleyne at half-past eight. Colonel Butler’s



BATTLE OF KIRBEKAN.

column at the same time was moving steadily, at first over broken and hard ground, and then over deep sand, until it reached the point where it pivoted to the left and advanced in the direction of the river. The enemy could be seen crowning the ridges as the force passed round his left flank, but he took no notice. But as the force pursued its way along the rear of the position the movement appears to have been discovered, and at a quarter past nine fire from the Remingtons was opened on the column, hitting two or three men. Detaching two companies of the Staffordshire Regiment under Colonel Eyre to take the high ridge by working up its shoulder, and a portion of the Black Watch to take the knoll nearest the river, whilst he himself with the remainder advanced upon the rear, Earle surrounded the enemy's position. Nevertheless, from a strong position, amid rocky and broken ground and a number of loop-holed buildings, the Arabs kept up a steady and well-directed fusillade. It was at this time that Colonel Eyre, of the South Staffordshire, fell, shot dead, and his detachment had to be reinforced from the main body.

It was found difficult to dislodge the enemy by musketry fire, and the order was about to be given to the Highlanders to carry the position at the point of the bayonet, when a body of the enemy abandoned their works, and, with spears and banners, charged towards the nearest companies of the Black Watch. The assailants were nearly all shot down by the withering fire with which they were met, and the rest fled to the river, where many of them were shot in the water as they attempted to escape. The Highlanders, with bagpipes playing, then scaled the rocks, and the ridges were taken.

When General Earle made his turning movement,

and so placed the detachment which he was leading between the enemy and their camp, the Cavalry went straight on to the latter three miles further on and captured it. So rapidly was this operation conducted by Colonel Butler's Hussars that the camp was in his possession before the Black Watch had taken the main position.*

In addition to forty-one donkeys and camels captured at Kirbekan, fifty-eight rifles, four fowling-pieces, two flint-lock muskets, one revolver, twenty-two swords, fifty-three spears, and ten standards, fell into the hands of the English. Some prisoners were taken, and, according to their statements, the enemy were surprised by General Earle attacking their rear, and thought the soldiers who got behind their position were coming from Berber.

Owing to the way in which the position was surrounded, it is difficult to see how many of the enemy could have escaped. Nevertheless, their losses are only put in the report as 200. As no account mentions more than 105 bodies having been counted on the field of battle, this appears a liberal estimate, even after allowing for the bodies swept away by the stream. The return of rifle ammunition expended gives a total of 24,040 rounds, or rather more than 120 for each man killed, leaving out of the calculation twenty-three shells fired from the Camel Battery. The English force engaged only numbered 1200, owing to the Gordon Highlanders and the half battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment not having come up; the former, in fact, had not succeeded in getting further than Berti.

The enemy's force at Kirbekan was stated by

* A private of the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment found in a donkey's saddle-bag an Arabic letter from the Governor-General of Berber to the Governor of the district, stating that Khartoum had fallen on the 26th January, and Gordon been killed.

prisoners as being from 1500 to 2000. General Brackenbury, however, has put the number who held the works at 800, and says that at least half of these escaped before the attack. The resistance made was due to the almost impregnable position taken up.

Owing to the excellent tactics adopted in taking the works in the rear the loss of the attacking force was but small. The death of General Earle, however, made Kirbekan a dearly purchased victory. He met his death shortly after the assault which resulted in the capture of the ridges. The troops were at the time being collected and formed up. Between the crests of the two main ridges there was a depression forming a small flat plateau, on which stood a stone hut with a thatched roof. Earle was forming up the ranks only ten yards from the hut, when it was discovered that there were men in it. One of the latter fired from the hut and shot a soldier. The General thereupon ordered the roof to be set on fire, at the same time approaching the hut. The roof commenced to burn, and a native rushed out, and was at once bayoneted. At this moment a shot was fired from a window of the hut, and the General fell, shot through the head. The back of the skull was shattered. He lived only a few minutes.*

On the 11th General Brackenbury received further

* Major-General William Earle received his first appointment in the army on October 17th, 1851. In June 1854 he rose to the rank of Adjutant, and served during the Crimean War, having been present at the battles of the Alma and Inkerman, and the siege of Sebastopol. Having become Lieutenant and Captain in 1855, he passed, two years later, from the 49th Foot to the Grenadier Guards. In 1863 he became Captain and Lieut-Colonel, receiving his Colonelcy in 1870, and becoming Major-General in 1880. He served as Brigadier-General of the expeditionary force to Egypt in 1882, and in that capacity commanded the base and lines of communication. At the conclusion of that campaign he was appointed to the command of the English garrisons at Alexandria, which post he held until he joined the advance up the Nile. General Earle was not only regretted by the entire British army, but also by all the members of the European colony of Alexandria, where he had made himself very popular during the period of his command.

instructions according to which the Expedition was to stay in the country till the Mahdi's power at Khartoum was destroyed, and arrangements were to be made for co-operation with General Buller in an attack on Berber. The instructions further stated that the column was to push on with all possible speed pursuant to orders.

On the same day the column continued its progress, the wounded officers and men being conveyed in the boats. The difficult Pass of Shukook was got through without opposition, though it bore signs of having been prepared for defence throughout its entire length of six miles.

On the 17th Salamat was occupied, and the force destroyed the house, palm-trees, and sakheas of Suleiman Wad Gamr, the chief author of Colonel Stewart's murder. Many relics of the murder were found, such as cards, papers, photographs, &c.

On the 20th, Hebbeh, close to the scene of the murder, was reached, and on that and the following day the 800 horses and camels of the force swam over to the opposite bank, the equipments and loads being ferried across in boats.

The wreck of Stewart's steamer was seen fixed upon a rock about 200 yards from the bank of the river. She was pitted with bullet-marks, and torn by fragments of shell. The natives had stripped her of everything useful.

The house of Fakri Wad Etman, where the murder was committed, was visited by General Brackenbury. Fragments of books, Stewart's visiting cards, and a shirt-sleeve stained with blood, were found close by.

Whilst the crossing was being effected, the troops not otherwise engaged were employed in destroying the houses and property of Fakri Etman. The force then advanced along the right bank towards Abu Hamid.

On the night of the 23rd, the whole column with 215 boats was concentrated at the last cluster of huts in the Monassir country, twenty-six miles from Abu Hamid, and the Cavalry which had scouted six miles ahead were still without touch of the enemy.

On the 24th, just as the further advance was being resumed, Brackenbury received Wolseley's instructions to discontinue the movement on Abu Hamid and return to Merawi. This was a bitter disappointment to both officers and men.

A strong patrol was advanced to within sight of Mograt Island (just opposite Abu Hamid), after which the column was reversed, reaching Hebbah again the same day.

On the 25th it remained at the halting-place the whole day, as the horses and camels absolutely required rest.

Continuing his movement down the river on the following day Brackenbury reached a village opposite Salamat. Here leaving the mounted troops and convoy to move independently on the right bank under the command of Colonel Butler, the General descended the river himself with the boats.

On the 4th March Hamdab was reached, the force having descended with the boats in nine days, what it had taken thirty-one days to ascend.

On the following day the force arrived at Merawi. The crossing commenced at two p.m., and was completed at 11.30 a.m. on the 6th.

On the 7th, Brackenbury, leaving the Black Watch, a troop of Hussars, the Egyptian Camel Corps, and a detachment of Engineers, to remain at Merawi under Colonel Butler, started with the rest for Korti, which was reached the following day.

Apart from the engagement at Kirbekan, the Nile

column had no fighting exploit to boast of. The crushing effect of that action was, however, shown by the fact that after the fight the enemy allowed General Brackenbury's force to march unmolested through the Monassir country, to take successively all the positions which had been prepared for defence, and subsequently to retire through the same positions without firing a shot or offering any opposition.

Credit is undoubtedly due to the column for the manner in which it triumphed over the difficulties caused by the nature of the river, which from a few miles above Merawi presented a succession of rapids. All these rapids, amongst the most formidable obstacles on the Nile, were ascended and descended at an unfavourable season, with a loss by drowning of only three lives throughout the entire operation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WOLSELEY AND THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR.

At Lord Wolseley's Head-quarters at Korti — Future Operations — Wolseley's view of the Situation — Composition of Souakim Force — Wolseley proposes going to Gubat — The Souakim and Berber Railway — Wolseley's Plans as to taking Berber — The Supply question — Return of the Nile Column ordered — Wolseley's view as to the Future.

To return to Lord Wolseley's head-quarters at Korti.

There is no doubt that the news of the Khartoum disaster was a severe blow to Wolseley. It seemed as if, for once, his star had deserted him. All hope of adding the rescue of Gordon and the relief of Khartoum to his list of triumphs, was gone from the General who had so often been described as 'the luckiest man in the British Army.'

On the 4th February Wolseley had telegraphed the disaster to the War Office. On the 5th he sent another message, saying that he had ordered all the wounded to be removed as soon as possible from Abu Klea and Gubat, and added, 'I only await the decision of Government to give further orders.'

There is here a gap in the published Blue Book, some of the messages sent from the War Office being evidently suppressed. But in a despatch to Sir Evelyn Baring, dated the 6th February it is stated that 'Her Majesty's Government have given complete discretion to Lord Wolseley to take all such measures as he may deem necessary for the further conduct of his operations, and they have assured his Lordship that he will receive any further assistance which he may desire, either by

the despatch of troops to Souakim and Berber, or in any other manner he may indicate.

On the 8th Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington as follows :—

‘The sooner you can now deal with Osman Digna the better. I should recommend brigade of Indian Infantry and one regiment of Punjaub Cavalry to be sent to Souakim as soon as possible to hold that place during summer, and co-operate with me in keeping road to Berber open ; the English troops you send now to Souakim might then either go to mountains near there for summer, or to Egypt to be ready for autumn campaign.’

The Government lost no time in carrying out Wolseley’s idea as regards Souakim. On the 8th February General Stephenson in Cairo was telegraphed by Lord Hartington to arrange for immediate purchase of camels for service at Souakim.*

Of the view taken by Lord Wolseley of the change in the situation produced by the fall of Khartoum, one may judge from the following extract from his despatch of the 9th February :—

‘I shall not attempt to disguise from your Lordship how deeply the reported fall of Khartoum is felt by all ranks in the army under my command. If it be literally true—and it is difficult to disbelieve it—the mission of this force, which was the relief of Khartoum, falls to the ground.

‘The strength and composition of this little army was calculated for the relief, not the siege and capture, of Khartoum, the two operations being entirely different in character and magnitude. The former meant one or more engagements in the open with an enemy who, owing to the geographical position of Khartoum, could not concentrate his forces without raising the siege, and who, in order to concentrate, would have had to pass his troops, guns, ammunition, &c., over two unfordable rivers of considerable breadth, in the face of General Gordon’s armed steamers.

‘If he opposed my advance along the right bank of the Nile upon Khartoum, he must have fought in a position where defeat would have been his destruction. I think I may say that, as long as Khartoum held out, he could not have prevented my entering it, although he

* It is said that the Mudir of Dongola being asked at this time if there was any prospect of good camels being obtained, answered that ‘he did not see why not, as the English had already bought up all the bad ones.’

might afterwards have awaited my attack in a selected position on the left bank of the White Nile to the south or south-west of the city.

‘With Khartoum in the enemy’s possession, the whole conditions are reversed, and the Mahdi—strengthened by the large number of rifles, guns, ammunition, &c., taken in that place, and by the captured troops, who would certainly fight on his side—could concentrate an overwhelming force to oppose my advance; and, if defeated, could still fall back upon the city, the siege and capture of which, situated as it is in the fork of two unfordable rivers, would be an impossible operation for the little army under my command, more especially as it would then be encumbered by a large number of wounded men. As I have already said, the force under my command was not intended for any operation of that magnitude, nor was such an operation even contemplated in the instructions I received from Her Majesty’s Government. Khartoum, in the hands of the enemy, cannot be retaken until the force under my command has been largely augmented in numbers and in artillery.’

On the 9th February Lord Hartington telegraphed to Wolseley the composition of the force which the Government proposed sending to Souakim, making altogether 9000 men. The despatch added that the Indian Brigade and cavalry asked for had also been ordered. The General was asked to give his opinion as between this and the smaller force, which could move more quickly.*

On the 11th Wolseley, after reflection, decided on an attack on Berber by the Nile Column under Earle, with the co-operation of Buller’s force from Gubat, and he telegraphed to Lord Hartington that he proposed leaving himself for Gubat to direct the operations.

To this Lord Hartington replied on the 13th that there appeared to be great advantages in Wolseley’s present position for communicating with both columns, and with Souakim and Egypt, and stated that the Government relied on him not to allow his natural wish to take an active part in the operations to influence his

* Lord Wolseley’s reply does not appear in the Blue Book.

decision. The General replied that, as he did not expect to take Berber before the 16th March, there was no immediate necessity to decide the question of his leaving. He added that he proposed to leave General Dormer in command at Korti in case he (Wolseley) felt it desirable in the interests of the service to go forward.

On the 17th Lord Hartington telegraphed to Wolseley further details as to the Souakim force, and also the arrangements made with Messrs. Lucas & Aird for the construction of a railway from Souakim to Berber.

This seems to have been the first mention of the railway. Wolseley replied that if he could take Berber before the hot weather set in, which was very doubtful, the railway could then be made through to that place without any cessation of construction; but, if Berber were in the enemy's hands, in all probability it could only be made to the neighbourhood of Ariab. In the meantime, rails, sleepers, &c., for the construction of the desert section of 110 miles, from Ariab to Berber, should be collected at Ariab.

On the 18th Lord Wolseley reported the retreat of Buller from Gubat. Speaking of that movement, his Lordship added as follows :—

‘I think he acted with wisdom and discretion; for, since the fall of Khartoum, the whole of the Mahdi's army is disposable, and could have invested him at Gubat with a large force, not only of men, but of guns; this they cannot do either at Abu Klea or Gakdul. My instructions to General Buller were on no account to allow himself to be shut in near Metammeh; and, with the information he had of the Mahdi's movements, in proceeding to Abu Klea, he has rightly interpreted the spirit of these instructions. The fall of Khartoum set free for the Mahdi a considerable army; and furnished him with an arsenal containing a great number of guns and rifles, and about 1,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition. Operations which before could be carried out under only the ordinary hazards of war cannot now be undertaken without incurring inordinate risks. When Khartoum fell, moreover, the main object for which General Stewart's force was sent to Metammeh ceased to exist. That object was to be prepared to march at

once, even at considerable hazard, to the assistance of Gordon, should it be found that he required immediate aid.

'The capture of Khartoum left his force without an objective; while, at the same time, it greatly increased the insecurity of its position. Its isolated situation, separated from me by 180 miles of desert, and liable at any moment to have its communications cut by a movement of the Mahdi down the Nile, has latterly caused me considerable anxiety.'

At the opening of Parliament on the 19th February the Government announced that it had decided on going to Khartoum to break the power of the Mahdi.

On the 20th February Lord Wolseley telegraphed that the state of his supplies would not admit of his going to Berber, even if he thought his lines of communication sufficiently secure, which he did not think they were, to warrant such a forward movement so late in the season. He would hold the line of river from Merawi to Dongola and Hanneck Cataract during the summer, and prepare for an autumn campaign. To do anything else would, he thought, be unwise.

The question of supplies touched on in Lord Wolseley's despatch, in the event of a new campaign being entered upon, threatened to become serious. Among the Commissariat stores were hundreds of boxes which had not been opened for examination, and what proportion of their contents might turn out fit for food was mere guess-work. Tons of damaged biscuits, and camel-loads of decomposed preserved meat, were almost daily condemned as unfit for food, and sent out to be buried in the desert. The country in the neighbourhood furnished a certain quantity of flour made from Indian corn, and also of fresh beef. Obviously neither of these could be depended on in operations to be undertaken in the desert. In such case the sole dependence of the force would be the preserved provisions forwarded by one single route, viz., by the Nile from Wady Halfa. Should this mode of supply break down, either through the

movements of the Mahdi or otherwise, the troops would be in a position of great difficulty.

With a view to carrying out the plan of holding the river as indicated, Wolseley now sent off to General Earle's Nile Column, to stop the advance upon Berber and to return to Merawi.

On the 21st Lord Hartington asked Wolseley to send his demand for Absarat railway as soon as he could, and inquired if anything more could be done for supplies for the summer.

Lord Wolseley replied on the 22nd as follows :—

'When I have concentrated my force on this part of the Nile, I have no fear for my communications, so I do not want any more troops here now. It is important to thoroughly crush Osman Digna, and restore peace to the country now under his influence, in order to push forward the railway, and, by a brilliant success near Souakim, make the Soudanese realise what they must expect when we move forward in the autumn.'

Wolseley's views on the military situation, and on the operations to be conducted, were communicated to Lord Hartington in a despatch dated 6th March, 1885, from which the following is an extract :—

'In reply to my telegram, your Lordship informed me that my immediate duty was to protect the province of Dongola—the only province of the Soudan which is still clear of the enemy—and that, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be completed, Her Majesty's Government had determined to destroy the Mahdi's power at Khartoum, in order that peace, order, and a settled government, might be established there. This I conceive to be in general terms a fair description of the new mission with which I have been intrusted, and which I shall endeavour to carry out next autumn.

'I take this opportunity of congratulating Her Majesty's Government upon having adopted the Nile route as the line of advance for this force on Khartoum. Had this army been despatched from Souakim as a base, and upon arrival at, or near, Berber, learnt that Khartoum had fallen, it could not possibly have transferred its base to the Mediterranean, for it could not have been fed under those circumstances in this part of the Nile Valley. The province of Dongola would have been at the enemy's mercy, and the frontiers of Egypt would have been open to his attack.

‘As it is impossible for me to undertake any offensive operations until about the end of summer, it is important that in the meanwhile Osman Digna’s power in the Souakim district should be crushed. The defeat will, in some measure, act as a counterpoise to the Mahdi’s capture of Khartoum. This operation is not difficult, as the forces are near the seaboard, and it should be immediately followed by the occupation of the Tokar and Sinkat districts. A railway should also be begun without delay at Souakim in the direction of Berber. Your Lordship has informed me that a contract has been entered into for the construction of this railway on a gauge of 4 ft. 8½ inches.

‘Although I do not for a moment entertain the idea that a railway of such a gauge can be completed over the 250 miles (about) of country lying between Souakim and Berber in time to have any very direct or immediate effect upon our operations towards Khartoum next autumn, I am convinced that active progress made upon it will bring home to Mohammed Ahmed, and to all intelligent Sheikhs, the fact that we are now in earnest, and do not mean to leave the country until we have re-established order and a settled government at Khartoum.

‘In the campaign before us the construction of this railway even as far as Ariab will, in case of necessity, secure us a second and alternative line of communication, by which supplies may be obtained and sick and wounded taken to the coast for embarkation. It will also give to our operations an appearance of irresistible strength, which the possession of only one line of supply, and that along 1400 miles of river, would never afford. For my main line of supply, at all events until Berber is taken, I must, it is true, depend upon this river. It is the only line of which I can be certain. I cannot trust in an advance on Khartoum to a railway which requires that that advance should have succeeded before it can be finished. But though it would not do to rely upon the Souakim-Berber line, it is nevertheless one which, when completed, will afford me immense assistance, at whatever period of the campaign its completion may take place.

‘I am now engaged in distributing the army along the left bank of the Nile on the open reach of water that extends from the Hanneck Cataract to Abu Dom, opposite Merawi. There I shall be quite prepared to meet Mohammed Ahmed at any time during the summer, should he, by any good fortune, be tempted to advance in this direction. During the summer I shall collect the supplies which this army will require for its advance in the autumn. The railway from Souakim to Berber would take about two years and five months to complete.

‘My experience of the 178 miles of easy desert between this place and Metamneh warns me against trusting, entirely and solely, to a desert route as a means of supply. Even supposing the wide gauge railway contracted for can be completed to Ariab by the 1st October next—which I am certain it cannot be—there would still remain to be dealt with 110 miles of desert, which, both as regards water supply and

the nature of the country to be traversed compare most unfavourably with the 100 miles between Korti and Gakdul. I have never had more than about 4000 mouths to feed in the desert here, and I have been assisted by over 1000 excellent hired camels in addition to my own camel transport; but I have, nevertheless, experienced the greatest difficulty in feeding the small number of men I have mentioned, and, in doing so, I have in a little over two months completely destroyed not only all the regular camel transport, but also almost all the camels of the four camel regiments. Most of the men of these regiments have had to make the return journey on foot, the few camels still able to work being employed in carrying food, water, ammunition, &c. Yet this 100 miles is fairly well supplied with water, and there is excellent grazing for camels all along it, two great advantages not possessed by the 110 miles between Ariab and Berber.

‘Looking to these facts, and remembering that no advance by any force from Ariab upon Berber can be made until the latter place is in our possession, and that it may very probably be selected by the enemy as the point where he will fight a decisive battle, it is absolutely necessary that the troops advancing from this province by the Nile Valley should be strong enough to defeat any force Mohammed Ahmed can there bring into the field against it.

‘I do not wish in this despatch, which will doubtless be made public, to enter into minute details as to the exact strength and constitution of the army which I consider necessary for next autumn’s operations. I shall content myself with saying that in addition to the troops now in the Nile Valley between Cairo and this place, and in addition to the battalion now ordered to Assouan, I shall require here for my lines of communication, and for my fighting force together, twelve extra battalions of British infantry, four strong squadrons of British cavalry mounted on Egyptian or Syrian horses, and two batteries of Horse Artillery (13-pounders) similarly horsed. Events later on will enable me to report to what extent these extra troops can be supplied from the force now at, or on its way to, Souakim. It is very desirable that the Brigade of Guards, which is at present landing at that place, should be included in the twelve extra battalions sent here for the autumn campaign.

‘It is to be expected that when Osman Digna’s power has been thoroughly broken the brigade of Indian infantry and the regiment of Indian cavalry, together with the Marines and one or two battalions of British infantry, will be amply sufficient for the protection of the Souakim district, and for holding and protecting the railway line during its construction. As already stated, the exact distribution of the remainder of the force now collecting at Souakim must be a matter for later consideration.

‘The above are the main outlines of the altered dispositions rendered necessary by the fall of Khartoum, and the consequent alteration

in the objects to be aimed at by the British army in the Soudan. I do not propose to enter into greater detail at present, and have only to add that the arrangements for supply and other preparations for an advance from this neighbourhood next autumn are actively progressing.'

In reading this despatch it will be seen that Wolseley lays stress upon the necessity of crushing Osman Digna's force at Souakim. He also recommends the immediate construction of the Souakim-Berber railway. But on the 20th February instructions had already been given to Graham to effect both these objects. Of this Wolseley was fully aware at the time, and it strikes one as singular that so late in the day he should be found advising the Government to take two steps which had already been decided on. The only probable explanation seems to be that, the Government having in the excitement of the moment directed the Souakim expedition on a scale far exceeding that asked for, and also ordered the construction of the railway, must have invited Lord Wolseley's approval in order to cover their own responsibility. This appears the more likely from the fact that in none of the published correspondence does the project of the railway appear to have originated with Wolseley.

Further, it will be noticed that his Lordship, whilst advising the construction of the railway (which he reckons would require two years and five months) is careful to point out that he does not for a moment entertain the idea that it could be constructed in time to have any direct or immediate effect upon the operations towards Khartoum, to be undertaken in the autumn. As if to make the matter doubly clear, he adds that in an advance on Khartoum he cannot trust to a railway which required that that advance should have succeeded before the railway could be finished.

Another singular feature in the despatch is the com-

placency with which his Lordship, after the total failure of the expedition by way of the Nile, congratulates the Government on having chosen that route.

The difficulties in the way of a summer campaign now began to be apparent. The hot weather had set in at Korti. The thermometer on the 5th March registered 104 degrees under the shade of the trees. Later on it went up two degrees higher still. The wind blowing from the desert was like a blast from a furnace. Under these conditions the tents with which the soldiers were provided offered little or no protection. Sickiness, too, began to break out, and several cases of enteric fever were reported.

The Nile Column, as already stated, got back to Korti on the 8th March. The last troops of the Desert Column arrived from Abu Klea on the 16th.

With the exception of the detachment left at Merawi the concentration of Wolseley's force was now complete.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SOUAKIM EXPEDITION OF 1885.

Object of the Expedition—Its Strength—The Souakim and Berber Railway—Motives of the British Government—Details of the Force—General Graham appointed to Command—His Instructions—Contract for the Railway—Reconnaissance to Hasheen—General Graham's Account of the Action at Hasheen—Details of the Fight—The British Losses—Numbers of the Enemy.

WHAT the real object and intentions of the Gladstone Administration were in directing the despatch of the Souakim expedition of 1885, will probably remain for ever a mystery.

Wolseley had pointed out the necessity of dealing a crushing blow to Osman Digna, and had suggested the sending of a Brigade of Indian Infantry, and one regiment of Punjaub Cavalry to Souakim to hold that place during the summer, and cooperate with him in keeping the road to Berber open. But his demands, so far as the published papers show, appear to have gone no further than that.

The expedition told off to Souakim was nevertheless fixed at 9000 men, and comprised nearly every arm of the service. In addition, there were all the plant, materials, and labour required for the purpose of making the Souakim-Berber railway. The season chosen for the expedition, too, was singularly unfortunate, coinciding as it did with the precise time of year at which, a twelvemonth before, the hot weather had compelled the withdrawal of Graham's army of 1884, and when even the one or two squadrons of Cavalry which Gordon had asked to be sent to Berber, were refused him.

The crushing of Osman Digna, and the opening up of the Souakim-Berber route, were the ostensible objects of the expedition. But this was to undertake in March 1885, with troops from England, precisely the enterprise which the Government, in March 1884, declined to undertake with troops on the spot. The only apparent change in the situation was that then the expedition would have been in time to have saved Khartoum, whereas now it was too late. It seems to have been fated that the policy of 'Rescue and Retire' should always be adopted, the former half too late, and the latter half too soon.

There is reason to believe that the Gladstone Administration felt the necessity of doing something to satisfy public opinion intensely excited by the news from Khartoum. The Government had allowed Khartoum to fall and Gordon to be sacrificed. The result was neither creditable to the Ministry, nor favourable to England's prestige. A wide-spread feeling of indignation and a determination to avenge the disgrace to the British arms prevailed.

Under these circumstances, borne away by popular clamour, the Government resolved upon the Souakim expedition.

Whatever may have been the motives of the Government in deciding upon the expedition to Souakim, no time was lost in making the necessary preparations. This time it was determined to carry out the operations on a grand scale.

The force was fixed at considerably more than double the number engaged in the Souakim expedition of 1884.

Amongst the troops ordered to take part in it, were the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards, 840 strong ; the 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards, 840 ; the 3rd Bat-

talion of the Grenadier Guards, 834 ; the 1st Battalion of the Shropshire Regiment, 800 ; the 2nd Battalion of the East Surrey, 600 ; the 1st Battalion of the Berkshire Regiment, 650 ; one Battalion of Royal Marines, 500 ; one regiment of Australian Infantry, some 500 strong ; some batteries of Royal Horse Artillery, of the Royal Artillery, and Australian Artillery ; some companies of the Royal Marine Artillery, and Royal Engineers, as well as squadrons of the 5th Lancers, and the 20th Hussars, and detachments of the Ordnance Commissariat, and Medical Staff Corps. In addition to these, an Indian Contingent of over 2000 men was provided. It comprised the 9th Bengal Cavalry, the 15th (Loodianah) Sikhs, the 17th Bengal Native Infantry, the 28th Bombay Native Infantry, and some companies of Madras Sappers. Besides the above, several hundred labourers were ordered from England, and one thousand coolies from India to construct the railway to Berber.

Probably to his own, and certainly to other people's surprise, General Graham was again selected for the command. Military critics had not forgotten how by his order to charge, given at an unfortunate moment, the General very nearly caused the wreck of the 2nd Brigade at Tamaai ; nor the ill feeling, bordering almost upon insubordination, which his treatment of the Black Watch had brought about in the Soudan army of 1884 ; and the appointment was freely criticised. The General, however, was a nominee of Lord Wolseley, and this, although it did not silence criticism, served in a great measure to satisfy public opinion.

Brevet - Major - General A. J. L. Fremantle was appointed to command the Brigade of Guards, and Major-General Greaves was named Chief of the Staff. The Infantry Brigade was placed under Major-General Sir J. C. McNeill, V.C

General Graham's instructions were on arrival at Souakim to take command of the forces which were to be assembled there, to make the best arrangements—which the shortness of the time at his disposal, before the hot weather commenced, would admit of—to organize a field force, and to make such transport arrangements as were possible to enable it to secure the first and most pressing object of the campaign, viz., the destruction of the power of Osman Digna.

The General was told that an agreement had been made with Messrs. Lucas and Aird to construct a railway from Souakim to Berber, and that on this he must greatly rely for his means of transporting supplies. It would therefore be of the first importance that every possible facility should be given to Messrs. Lucas and Aird in the conduct of their operations.

The first object was the destruction of Osman Digna's power, and to effect this, the General was as early as possible, to attack all the positions which he occupied and to disperse the troops defending them. It was hoped that good, healthy positions in the mountains might be found there for British troops.

The pushing on of the railway from Souakim towards Berber was the next point to which he was to direct the greatest attention. His instructions concluded :—

'If Berber is not taken this summer by Lord Wolseley, the railway cannot be pushed much beyond Ariab, and there all the railway plant and material necessary for the 100 miles between it and Berber should be collected as soon as possible, so that the advance, when the cool weather begins, and Berber is taken, may be made at once.

'You will consider yourself under the orders of General Wolseley, commanding in Egypt, and you will place yourself in direct telegraphic communication with him. Within the limits of the above instructions you have perfect discretionary powers to conduct operations in any manner which you may deem best.'

By the agreement with Messrs. Lucas and Aird, the contractors were to construct for the War Department

for the purposes of the expeditionary force, a 4 ft. 8½-inch gauge single line of railway from Souakim, and thence in sections so far towards Berber as might from time to time be ordered in writing by the Secretary of State, and also an 18-inch gauge single line of railway in or about Souakim. The War Department engaged to keep the way clear and the working staff protected. The contractors were to supply plant and working staff, and, with regard to the latter, were to be at liberty, with the consent of the War Secretary, to employ natives as labourers. The staff to be paid by the Government, and rationed and clothed by the War Department. The contractors were to receive a commission of 2 per cent. upon all expenditure from the War Department, such commission, however, not to exceed in the whole 20,000*l.*, and they were to be entitled to a further sum not exceeding 20,000*l.* if the railways should be satisfactorily completed in the judgment of the Secretary of State.

On the 27th February, Lord Hartington again called Graham's attention to the necessity for rapidly constructing the railway from Souakim to Berber, and to the extreme importance of the services it would be required to perform, not only in connexion with the advance of Graham's force, but also in connexion with the troops under Lord Wolseley's command when concentrated at Berber. His Lordship pointed out that by this route alone, when the railway should have been completed, could that force be supplied, re-equipped, and reinforced with that precision and certainty so essential to the future operations on the Nile. He continued :—

‘ When the first and essential operation of crushing Osman Digna and clearing the country sufficiently to make it safe for the constructors of the railway is accomplished, the next most important duty will be the pushing on of the railway, and I request that you will facilitate and

aid this object by every means in your power. You will, of course, decide what military posts you will occupy.'

Towards the end of February, Graham's force began to assemble at Souakim, and from that date troop-ships and store-ships began to come in almost daily.

On the 12th March Graham reached Souakim, and assumed command of the force assembled there.

Considering the camp to be too extended, rendering night attacks too easy, he at once took steps to reduce the front occupied. The enemy had in fact for some time been in the habit of attacking in small bodies every night, and succeeded in killing or wounding many of the sentries. The camps were surrounded by zeribas and entanglements which were never attacked, the plan adopted being to creep in at unguarded points, and stab or spear the men as they slept. A large number of so-called friendly natives were employed about the camps in the daytime, and so acquired a knowledge of the localities. Returning at night it was thus easy for them to choose positions which were unguarded, and so to murder the sleeping soldiers. That this was so, was shown by more than one native who had been shot down being found to be wearing the red badge given to the 'friendlies.'

On the 17th Graham's force amounted to 491 officers, 10,222 non-commissioned officers and privates, 1616 horses, 2759 camels, 791 mules, and 2629 followers. At this date troop and store-ships were still arriving.

On the 19th Graham made a reconnaissance to Hasheen about seven and a half miles from Souakim with the Cavalry Brigade and Mounted Infantry, the Infantry of the Indian Contingent moving out about four miles in support. The enemy retired in front of the British force, evacuating the village of Hasheen, and making for the mountains, but not without

first offering some resistance, by which one private was killed, and one officer, Lieutenant J. R. K. Birch of the Mounted Infantry and a sergeant, were wounded.

After this the whole force marched back to the camp.

On the 20th Graham determined on a general advance to Hasheen, and at 6.15 a.m., leaving only the Shropshire Regiment and details as guards, the whole force, numbering about 10,000 men, marched out from the camp. Making for the hills in front of Hasheen, the Cavalry moved off at about 6.10 a.m., the Infantry following at 6.25 in the following order :—The Guards in columns of companies, on the right ; the 2nd Brigade (East Surrey Regiment and Marines), in line of company columns of fours ; the Indian Brigade in column of companies on the left ; the Horse Artillery Battery on the right of the line. The water camels and transport animals followed in rear of the second Brigade.

The action is described in the General's despatch as follows :—

‘The advance was made in a direction nearly due west, and the first halt took place from 7.35 a.m. to 8.5 a.m. The Infantry reached the foot of the hills at about 8.25 a.m. The 17th and 24th Companies Royal Engineers, the Madras Sappers, and the 70th East Surrey Regiment, were ordered to commence work at once. The enemy had fallen back on Dihilibat and the Beehive Hill, exchanging shots with my advanced guard at about eight a.m. I now determined to clear these hills, and gave orders to the infantry to advance in the following order :—2nd Brigade in first line, Indian Contingent in support, Guards in reserve ; the Horse Artillery to take up a position on Beehive Hill.

‘At about nine a.m. the force had reached the foot of Dihilibat Hill. The Berkshire Regiment advanced up the steep slopes of the hill in attack formation, with one half battalion Royal Marine Light Infantry on the right rear, and the other half battalion in rear of the centre of the Berkshire Regiment as supports. The ascent was very steep and difficult, but the first spur was occupied without opposition. This spur is separated from the main edge by a deep ravine. The enemy now, however, opened a heavy fire from the summit, and from a pos-

ition further to the right. The Berkshire Regiment replied by volleys, and the half battalion of Marines on the right was advanced to flank the enemy's position. The enemy then abandoned their position, and the Berkshire Regiment advanced to the summit, and detached one company to a spur on the left, from which an effective fire was opened upon the retiring enemy. Meanwhile the Indian Brigade had taken up a position between the foot of Dihilibat and the Beehive Hill; the Guards also were formed up near the foot of the north-east spur of Dihilibat Hill.

'The Horse Artillery, which moved out with the Guards' Brigade as far as the first hills, received orders to follow the Indian Brigade in its further advance, and to take up a position on Beehive Hill. While passing under the Hill Dihilibat they were heavily fired upon, losing two horses. The slopes of Beehive Hill proving impracticable for the guns, the battery, after firing a few rounds of shrapnel into the bush, detached three guns to a position on a low spur to the west of Beehive Hill, where they remained in action for some time shelling parties of the enemy who were visible across the valley on the spurs of the Wharatab Range. The battery subsequently retired with the Guards' square, and took up a position on one of the hills reached at 8.25. Here several rounds were fired, subsequently to the retirement of the Infantry, at parties of the enemy which appeared on the low spur.

'At about 9.40 a.m. two squadrons of the 9th Bengal Cavalry were detached by Colonel Ewart, commanding Cavalry Brigade, to pursue the enemy, who, driven from the Hill Dihilibat by the Berkshire Regiment, were retiring south in the direction of Tamaai. Colonel Ewart ordered two squadrons to dismount and fire volleys. These squadrons were charged by the enemy in considerable strength, and retired with loss on the square formed by the Guards at the foot of the Dihilibat Hill.

'During the morning the 5th Lancers were employed in securing the right front. At about 10.45 a considerable force of the enemy endeavoured to advance down the Hasheen Valley from the north-west, apparently attempting to turn my right flank. Both the 5th Lancers and a portion of the 9th Bengal Cavalry were engaged with the small advanced parties of this force, and succeeded in checking the movement. During this time work was carried on by the Royal Engineers and Madras Sappers, assisted by parties of the East Surrey Regiment, and by about 2.30 p.m. four strong posts had been formed, and a zeriba commenced.

'At 12.25 I recalled the Indian Brigade, the Berkshire Regiment, and the Marines covering the movement. The latter then joined the Indian Brigade, and, forming a single square, retired to the more open ground south. The Guards' square and the Artillery remained at the foot of the Dihilibat Hill till one p.m., and then retired, taking a direction somewhat to the south of that followed by the 2nd and Indian Brigades.

‘During the retirement of the Guards the right face of the square received a hot fire from parties of the enemy concealed among the bushes, and suffered some loss. By firing steady volleys into the bush the enemy’s fire was effectually silenced, and the Brigade halted close to the south foot of the hills first mentioned. The general retirement of the whole force began about 4.30 p.m., and the camp was reached at 6.15.

‘The Dihilibat Hill was carried by the Berkshire Regiment with the greatest spirit, and the behaviour of the Guards’ square under a heavy fire from an unseen enemy was marked by extreme steadiness. During the formation of the fortified posts, the presence of the enemy in rear rendered it necessary several times to order the East Surrey Regiment to stand to their arms. This was done without any confusion, and the Royal Engineers and Madras Sappers quietly continued their work on the defences.

‘It is impossible in such a country to estimate the numbers of an enemy who is able to remain completely concealed until he chooses to attack; but it is probable that on this occasion the number of Arabs present was about 3000, of whom at least 250 were killed, much of this loss being caused by the fire of the Berkshire Regiment from the commanding position they had taken up on Dihilibat Hill. The scouting was very efficiently performed by the cavalry, considering the great difficulties of the country with which they had to contend.’

The enemy according to other accounts seemed to have lost none of the daring with which they had met Graham’s force a twelvemonth before. Instead of fleeing before the charge of the Bengal Lancers, the Soudanese actually charged the Cavalry. The same tactics were practised as at El-Teb, the Soudanese throwing themselves on the ground at the critical moment of the charge, and slashing with their swords at the horses’ legs. So badly were the Lancers used that they had to fall back as stated in the despatch, losing one non-commissioned officer and four men, whose horses had been hamstrung in the encounter.

In the course of the fight, some 150 of the enemy sprang up from behind a hill three hundred yards off, and had the audacity to charge the whole of the Guards’ Brigade. The assailants were received by such a deadly fire from the face of the square that they never succeeded

in getting nearer than fifteen or twenty yards of the line of bayonets. Those who survived at once turned and fled, leaving behind their wounded chief on a camel, within thirty yards of the square, where he was made prisoner.

The object of the recall of the Indian Brigade at 12.25 p.m., and the subsequent retirement towards the Hill (then being fortified by the 70th Regiment) of that force, the Berkshire Regiment, and Marines, followed at one p.m. by the Guards and Artillery, practically the whole force, is not stated in the General's despatch. But from other reports it seems that the troops had got into a position where the thickness of the bush gave the enemy the advantage of pouring a heavy fire into General Graham's force, whilst the latter could only deliver an ineffective fire in return.* At the position to which the troops fell back, the ground was more open, and Graham's force could make better practice with their Martinis.

The apparent intention of the enemy to turn the right of the British line, also probably influenced the General in retiring.

After some hours' marching and fighting under a blazing sun, the force set out on the return to Souakim, leaving a detachment to guard the fortified posts made by the Engineers and Madras Sappers.

The following are the casualties as reported by telegram from Graham :— Officers.— Killed.— Lieutenant M. D. D. Dalison, Scots Guards ; one native officer, Indian Contingent ; four non-commissioned officers and privates, and twelve sowars of the Indian Contingent. Wounded.—Major A. B. Harvey, 5th

* According to the account of an eye-witness the Horse-Artillery was stationed at one period at a point where the underwood grew so thickly that the gunners could not see seventy yards away from the guns.

Lancers, severely; Lieutenant G. E. Benson, Royal Artillery, slightly; Surgeon I. R. Lane, Medical Staff, very dangerously (since dead); Major D. A. Robertson, 9th Bengal Lancers, severely; twenty-six non-commissioned officers and privates, and thirteen sowars, and three privates of the Indian Contingent.

The enemy's forces were, as usual, liberally estimated in the various newspaper reports of the action, some putting the number as high as 14,000 men. General Graham's original estimate was 4000, but this he subsequently reduced to 3000, a number probably much nearer the mark.

CHAPTER XXX.

ATTACK ON MC NEILL'S ZERIBA.

Official Report of the Attack on Sir John McNeill's Zeriba—Question whether a Surprise or not—Details of the Engagement—The British Losses—Numbers of the Enemy slain—General Graham's Advance to the Zeriba—More Fighting.

By the establishment of the fortifications at Hasheen, General Graham was able to protect his right flank and line of communications in the ensuing operations towards Tamaai.

Preparations were now made for the advance.

On the 22nd March, one squadron of the 5th Lancers, the Naval Brigade, with four Gardner guns, a detachment of the Royal Engineers, the Berkshire Regiment, the Royal Marines, a company of Madras Sappers, the 15th Sikhs, the 17th Bengal and 28th Native Infantry, and one squadron of the 20th Hussars, supported by the Indian Brigade under General Hudson, moved out from the camp. What followed is thus described by General Graham :—

‘ My intention was to form a zeriba about eight miles from Souakim, to act as an intermediate depôt for the supplies and water required for an advance in force on Tamaai. I further intended that the Indian Brigade on returning should leave one battalion in an intermediate zeriba about four miles from camp.

‘ The force advanced in échelon of brigade squares, the 2nd Brigade leading; the Indian Brigade, under Brigadier Hudson, following on the right rear. I myself proceeded with the force for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, then returned to camp. At about 2.45 p.m., heavy firing was heard in the direction taken by Sir J. McNeill's force, and I immediately ordered out the Guards' Brigade and the Horse Artillery battery, and proceeded about three miles, following the line to Tamaai. Receiving a

message from Sir J. McNeill that he was in no need of assistance, I returned to camp with the Guards.

‘Sir J. McNeill’s convoy, on its march through the dense scrub which lies between Souakim and the hills, experienced much difficulty. The great mass of camels enclosed in the Indian Brigade square was continually getting into disorder, owing to the high prickly bushes through which it was obliged to force its way. Thus, frequent halts were necessary in order to get the camels back into position, and restore the chain of defence with which it is necessary in such a country to surround the transport animals and non-combatants.

‘It was soon apparent that the original plan could not be carried out in its entirety; since, if the force advanced eight miles, there would not remain sufficient daylight to allow a zeriba to be formed, and then for the Indian Brigade to return and form an intermediate zeriba. Sir J. McNeill, therefore, determined to halt and form his zeriba at about six miles only from the camp at Souakim.

‘The force was formed up as follows: the Indian Brigade took up three sides of a square fronting nearly north,* south, and west; the transport animals were in the centre. The Berkshire Regiment, Marines, and the Royal Engineers and Madras Sappers, began at once to cut brushwood, and form zeribas.

‘The work proceeded steadily, and the south zeriba was told off to the Berkshire Regiment, with two naval Gardners; the north zeriba to the Marines, also with two naval Gardners. The central zeriba was intended to contain the stores.

‘At about 2.30 p.m., the disposition of the force appears to have been as follows:—Half the Berkshire regiment were south of the southern zeriba, cutting brushwood; their arms were piled inside. The lines were held by six companies 17th Native Infantry; by the 15th Sikhs; by the 28th Bombay Native Infantry; and by two companies of the 17th Native Infantry. Outposts, consisting of groups of four men each, were thrown out from 80 to 120 yards to the front of the three Indian regiments. These three regiments themselves were formed in two deep line. The other half-battalion of the Berkshire regiment were having their dinners at about 250 yards to the east of the zeriba. The Marines were inside the north zeriba, having just finished cutting brushwood. The camels had been unloaded in the central zeriba, and had begun to file out, in order to be formed up outside ready for the return march. The squadron 5th Lancers formed a chain of Cossack posts (each four men), at a distance of about 1000 yards from the force, the rest of the squadron being held in support on some open ground about 500 yards to the south-west of the zeriba. A squadron of the 20th Hussars was patrolling the ground between the zeriba and Souakim.

* Graham errs in putting *East* instead of *North*.

'Shortly after 2.30 p.m. three messages were sent in from the 5th Lancers outposts, announcing first the presence of the enemy on their front, and immediately afterwards his advance. Very soon after this the cavalry galloped in, closely followed by the Arabs.

'The 5th Sikhs and 28th Bombay Native Infantry stood firm and maintained an intact line, receiving and repulsing successive attacks with a heavy fire. The attack was delivered mainly on the southern and western sides. A large number of the enemy entered the south zeriba at a point where there was no brushwood and merely an unfinished sandbag parapet. The Gardner guns were being placed in position at the time, and could not be got into action, so that their detachments, who stood their ground gallantly, suffered severely.

'Other parties of the enemy, following the retreat of the 17th Native Infantry, dashed into the central zeriba, and caused a stampede among the animals and panic among the native drivers. A general rush of the latter took place both to the open side and also through the north zeriba, where a portion of the Marines were for the moment carried away by it.

'In a short time the whole of the Arabs in the south zeriba were killed or driven out by the half-battalion of the Berkshire Regiment, who captured a flag, which the enemy had planted on the sandbag parapet. The Marines cleared the north zeriba, and, assisted by the Berkshire, the central zeriba also.

'Meanwhile, the half-battalion of the Berkshire Regiment, which was dining when the alarm was given, formed rallying square, and succeeded in repelling two successive attacks without loss, afterwards fighting their way back to the zeriba. Other small bodies of men, who were outside the zeriba at the moment of the attack, were similarly collected by the exertions of the officers, and succeeded in making their way back to the zeriba.

'A large number of camels which were outside of the zeriba before the attack took place, or had stampeded on its occurrence, were unavoidably shot, as the enemy rushed in among them, cutting and hamstringing them in all directions.

'The whole affair appears to have lasted about twenty minutes, and the attack seems to have been delivered in two main rushes. The enemy's force was not less than 2000 strong; but, under the circumstances, it was impossible to form an accurate estimate. The attack was delivered with extreme determination, the Arabs charging at full speed, and in some cases even leaping over the low bushes, forming the unfinished zeriba.

'The great loss of transport animals was due to the rush of the enemy through the south and central zeriba. The animals stampeded, became mixed up with those already formed up outside the zeriba, and the enemy being amongst them in all directions, they were shot in large numbers by our own men.

'The detachment of the Naval Brigade in the south zeriba gallantly stood to their guns, and suffered very severely. The Marines, also behaved very well, and though their zeriba was broken through by the rush of transport animals they re-formed at once, and contributed effectively to the repulse of the enemy.

'The 15th Sikhs had to sustain several rushes of the enemy, and, together with the 28th Bombay Regiment, maintained an unbroken front.

'The loss in officers was severe, and was due to the fact that, in the confusion arising from the sudden attack, individual attempts were gallantly made to collect isolated bodies of men to stem the determined rush of the enemy. I may mention Major von Beverhoudt, of the 17th Native Infantry, Captain Romilly and Lieutenant Newman, of the Royal Engineers, as instances of officers who lost their lives in the brave effort to check the enemy's fierce onslaught; while Lieutenant Seymour, R.N., with his gun detachment, also met death at the post of duty.

'Although our sacrifice has been severe, I am convinced that the complete repulse and heavy loss which the enemy has sustained, involving (as it has done) the destruction of more than 1000 fighting men, will prove to have produced an impression which will definitely facilitate my future operations. The zeriba has since been strengthened considerably, and no attempt has been made to attack it. I am now storing water and provisions there, with a view to a further advance as soon as possible.'

The attack on the zeriba and the successful repulse of the enemy on the 22nd constitute another of the events of the war which were more creditable to the individual officers and men engaged than to those who held the command.

It has been said that General McNeill has denied that what occurred was a surprise. This, however, hardly makes the matter better so far as regards those who are responsible for what occurred. It was probably not a surprise in the sense that is understood of a night attack, or an assault by an enemy whose presence was neither known nor suspected. But that the attack, when it came, found the British force in a state of unpreparedness, is a proposition which can scarcely be contested.

The place selected for the zeriba, situated as it was,

in the midst of thick bushes and brushwood, was such as to suggest the necessity for taking the utmost precaution. The enemy were known, or might have been known, to have been in the neighbourhood. As a fact, large bodies of them had been observed from Souakim at 7 a.m. that morning crossing from the direction of Hasheen. This being so, it seems hard to believe that, even allowing for the difficult nature of the ground, a proper system of scouting and outposts would not have revealed their approach and given time to prepare for their reception.

Instead of this, what was done was to employ a portion of a squadron of Lancers in forming a chain of posts at a distance of 1000 yards, or a little over half-a-mile from the zeriba, to form the remainder on open ground 500 yards nearer still, and to keep a squadron of Hussars patrolling between the zeriba and Souakim, the side the least likely to be attacked. Of the outposts thrown out from 80 to 120 yards in advance of the Indian Regiments it is unnecessary to say anything. The inadequacy of these precautions was shown by the result.

According to the official report, one half of the Berkshire Regiment was cutting brushwood, their arms being piled inside and the other half were having their dinners 250 yards from the zeriba. The Engineers were out working. The Berkshire Regiment and Marines, it should be remembered, formed the only two English battalions on the field. One half of them was therefore in a state of unreadiness. The other half, that is to say, the Marines, was inside the north zeriba, having just finished cutting firewood. What they were actually doing at the moment of the attack is not stated in the despatch. Had they been standing at their arms ready for any eventuality, the fact would probably have been mentioned. Possibly they, like the half of the Berkshire

Regiment, were also having their dinners. As to the Indians, a correspondent says they were just 'falling in to start,' which would imply that they were not formed up in readiness to repel an attack.

In unofficial reports the position of the force was described as follows. The Berkshire Regiment had commenced moving into their zeriba; the Marines were commencing to dig their trench, and had piled arms; dinner and water had been served out to the men, and the whole force was preparing to entrench for the night, the camels being outside the zeribas, and all seemed perfectly quiet.

That the distance at which the cavalry outposts had been established was insufficient is shown by the fact that 'very soon after' the messages were received announcing the presence of the enemy, 'the cavalry galloped in, closely followed by the Arabs.' The exact time which elapsed was probably more a matter of seconds than minutes.

According to one account :—

'Suddenly from the bush all along the face of the zeriba fronting Tamaai burst out a clamour of savage cries, and the next instant the whole assemblage of transport animals plunged forward. There was a multitude of roaring camels apparently heaped one upon another, with strings of kicking and screaming mules, entangled in one moving mass. Crowds of camp-followers were carried along by the huge animal wave—crying, shouting, and fighting. All these together surged up on the zeriba, any resistance being utterly hopeless. This mass of brutes and terrified natives swept all before it, and a scene of indescribable confusion ensued.'

As the transport animals rushed in, many of the camp-followers were shot by the infantry. The Sudanese then, as if by magic, swarmed out of the bush upon the zeribas. The Arabs glided and crept in all directions among the legs of the animals, and within a minute and a half they were on the soldiers. Cries, shouts, yells, and deafening shrieks, combined

with a furious rifle-fire and a rush of stampeded camels, made up a bewildering din. Several of the enemy actually penetrated the zeribas, but the rush was checked by the steady fire of the Marines and the Berkshire Regiment. All the troops rallied in small parties at the corners. Men of the Berkshire Regiment, Marines, Indians, and blue-jackets, were all mingled together, back to back, and fighting with desperate tenacity ; the moment was so critical that, had there been the least flinching, a disaster must have been the consequence. The Soudanese, falling upon the transport, hamstrung and mutilated all the camels and mules they could reach. They also fell upon the camp-followers, cutting them up right and left.

There was trouble with the 17th Bengal Native Infantry outside the south zeriba. They were ordered to retire, but the order seems to have been misunderstood, for Major Drury, commanding the left battalion, halted his men, and they gallantly kept the enemy at bay. The order to retire was repeated, and this time the 17th not merely retired, but fairly bolted, and rushed headlong into the zeriba. Major Drury, who vainly strove to stay the mad rush, was left in the rear, and, seeing one of his men drop disabled, stopped and attempted to save him, although the enemy were close upon them. In another moment they were hacking and thrusting at the officer with their spears and swords. For several minutes Major Drury fought with at least twenty rebels, and with his single sword kept them from their prey, nor did he abandon his efforts to save his comrade until a spear-wound in the neck, and the danger of being hopelessly surrounded, compelled him to retire. In their rush for the zeriba many of the 17th were shot by the soldiers defending it.

The scene inside the zeriba is described as terrible—

a hand-to-hand combat raged there. The Arab swordsmen were cutting and slashing at soldiers, camels, and horses alike. The Native Infantry were inextricably mixed up with baggage, camels, and mules in the wildest disorder. The number of the enemy who got into the zeriba was just over 100. These were all killed, and 105 bodies were counted there when the fight was over. General McNeill had a narrow escape, his horse shying just as he was about to jump into the zeriba. Lieutenant Charteris, his aide-de-camp, rushed to his rescue, turning aside one gun pointed straight at the General, and cutting down another assailant with his sabre. As Charteris was thus engaged he was attacked with fury by a young Arab, a boy, not more than ten years old. The latter fought like a tiger, and succeeded in spearing Charteris through the arm before he himself was shot. The Naval Brigade, after great difficulties owing to the rush of animals through the zeriba, got into action with the Gardners, and opened fire with telling effect.

The redoubt towards Tamaai was the scene of a desperate struggle. There were killed Lieutenant Seymour, of the *Dolphin*, and five men of the Naval Brigade, all being stabbed with spears. Dr. Digan was wounded. Captain Domville, in command of the Brigade, had his horse killed, as also had Colonel Kelly, the Brigade-Major. Colonel Kelly was fiercely attacked, he killed one of his assailants, but another was just about to spear him in the back when Captain Domville shot the Arab dead.

Having shaken off the incubus of the transport charge, the bulk of the Indian Infantry held their own in gallant style. In something under the twenty minutes mentioned by General Graham the fight was over.

Great gallantry was displayed in the course of the action. In the very beginning outside, away from the squares, a number of men on fatigue duties, cutting bush, were cut off from the main body. They quickly improvised a square hard by the field kitchens. Conspicuous among them were to be seen Major Alston and the Rev. Mr. Collins, one of the chaplains, fighting back to back. Here the 17th Bengal Infantry were sadly unsteady, and in their excitement not amenable to that discipline the display of which was so conspicuous in the Marines. The bugles were repeatedly sounded for them to cease firing, but they did not heed the command, and continued firing at perilous random, especially towards the little square under Alston. As the bugles were ineffective Mr. Collins volunteered to cross the bullet-swept ground, and convey the orders to cease firing. Stepping forth, calm and collected in demeanour, the chaplain walked across to the Indians, and then returned with similar calmness to the little square.

The Soudanese fought with the utmost courage. One man came rushing on to the zeriba holding by the hand a boy armed with a knife. Throwing the boy over the obstruction he jumped in after him, and immediately afterwards both were killed. When the firing had ceased, wounded Arabs still came on, holding up their hands as if asking to be shot.

General McNeill's force suffered severely, having, exclusive of camp-followers, six officers and ninety-four men killed, and six officers and 136 men wounded, and one officer and ten men missing. Amongst the killed were Captain Francis J. Romilly, and Lieutenant C. M. C. Newman, of the Royal Engineers; Lieutenant Montague H. M. Seymour, of the Naval Brigade; Major von Beverhoudt, of the Indian Contingent; Quarter-Master C. Eastmead, of the Ordnance Store Department, and

Lieutenant George S. Swinton, of the Berkshire Regiment. The officers wounded were :—Royal Navy, severely, Surgeon M. Digan ; Staff, Lieutenant Hon. A. D. Charteris, Coldstream Guards, A.D.C. ; Royal Engineers, Captain C. B. Wilkinson ; 17th Bengal Native Infantry, Lieutenant F. M. Drury ; 28th Bombay Native Infantry, dangerously, Lieutenant A. T. F. Edwards, slightly, and Lieutenant Thompson.

The loss in transport animals was enormous, over 900 camels alone being killed. Scores of them had been left outside the zeriba, and were shot as the enemy behind them swarmed on to the attack.

The enemy's loss was severe. General Graham states that 1000 bodies were found on the field. Besides the 105 bodies counted in the zeriba, 200 more were found in front of the Berkshire Regiment. Near the redoubt held by the Naval Brigade, the dead lay in heaps. All around the ground was literally strewn with bodies. Among them were several women and boys.

General Graham was at Souakim whilst the attack was made on the zeriba. On first hearing the firing at 2.45 p.m., he ordered the Guards and Horse Artillery to go to McNeill's assistance. The force advanced two miles on the road when a message sent by the field-telegraph from the zeriba arrived, stating that the attack had been repelled, after which the proposed reinforcements returned to Souakim.

The following day Graham advanced to McNeill's zeriba. Here he sent off the following despatch, dated Souakim, March 23rd, 6.30 p.m. :—

'Advanced Zeriba, 12 noon.

'Arrived here with Guards and large convoy. Am sending in wounded and baggage animals with Indian Brigade and Grenadier Guards, under Fremantle, leaving two battalions of Guards here with McNeill's Brigade. A strong zeriba has been constructed, and I consider position

secure against any number of enemy. The attack yesterday was very sudden and determined, and came unfortunately on our weakest point. The Sikhs charged the enemy with bayonet. The Berkshire behaved splendidly, clearing out the zeriba where entered and capturing three standards. Marines also behaved well. Naval Brigade was much exposed and suffered severely. Engineers also suffered heavily, being out working when attacked. The enemy suffered very severely, more than a thousand bodies being counted. Many chiefs of note are believed to have fallen. I deeply regret our serious losses, but am of opinion that McNeill did everything possible under the circumstances. The cavalry, 5th Lancers, did their best to give information, but the ground being covered with bush it was impossible to see any distance. The troops behaved extremely well. All the staff and regimental officers did their utmost. Enemy charged with reckless courage, leaping over the low zeriba to certain death; and, although they gained a temporary success by surprise, they have received a severe lesson, and up to the present time have not again attempted to molest the zeriba.'

Of the scene round McNeill's zeriba some idea may be formed from the following description :—

'When going from Souakim the last three miles of the march were marked at every step by graves, Arab and Indian, so shallow that from all oozed dark and hideous stains, and from many protruded mangled feet, half-stripped grinning skulls, or ghastly hands still clenched in the death agony, though reduced to little more than bone and sinew. Strewed around, thicker and thicker, as we neared the scene of that Sunday's fight, lay the festering bodies of camels and mules; and around them hopped and fluttered, scarcely moving when our column passed, hundreds of kites and vultures. The ground was also thickly sown with hands and feet dragged from their graves by the hyænas, and the awful stench and reek of carrion which loaded the air will never be forgotten, as I think, by any of us. Day after day we passed and repassed over the same sickening scene with our convoys, in blinding dust and under a scorching sun, obliged to move at a foot's pace to keep up with the weary camels, and to pick our steps carefully for fear of suddenly setting foot on one of those dreadful heaps of corruption.'

On the 25th March a convoy was sent out to McNeill's zeriba, under escort of the 15th Sikhs, 28th Bombay, and the Madras Sappers, with a few Cavalry. When three miles from Souakim the convoy halted according to instructions, commenced cutting wood and forming a zeriba. A battalion composed of Guards and

Marines from McNeill's force, marched towards them and was attacked on the way by a long range fire from the enemy, by which a Lieutenant of the Marines and one private were wounded. At two p.m. the two escorts met, when the Guards and Marines taking over the convoy prepared to return to McNeill's zeriba. At this moment the enemy appeared in force and attacked the column. The Guards, Marines, and Cavalry, moving out in four different detachments, fired into the attacking force and dispersed it.

The Guards and Marines then started again, but after ten minutes the enemy again appeared and fired a volley into them, which was at once returned. After less than a quarter of an hour a third attack was made. The Guards fired volley after volley, and once more drove back their assailants. The column then renewed its march to the zeriba, parties of the enemy still following them, and from time to time attacking their rear. Eventually the party got safely to McNeill's zeriba.

The result of the day's proceedings was to show that the enemy, in no way disheartened by the losses on the 22nd, were now in force, and ready to attack within four miles of Souakim. The attempt on the convoy was evidently made with the object of capturing the supplies destined for McNeill; and though it failed, it showed the increasing boldness of the enemy.

On the 25th, a war balloon which had been sent out to McNeill's zeriba, made an ascent in charge of Major Templar. The same day, with a view to the advance, the head-quarters camp was shifted to a spot two miles nearer Tamaai, and the East Surrey Regiment having destroyed the zeriba on the hills near Hasheen, came in and joined the main body.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EVACUATION OF DONGOLA.

Withdrawal from Korti—Wolseley's Recall to Cairo—Affairs in Afghanistan—Wolseley's Proposals as to Frontier and Retention of Dongola—Views of the Government—Wolseley's Protest—Arrangements for the Future—Wolseley's Departure for Souakim—Opinions of General Buller, Sir Charles Wilson, and Sir E. Baring.

TOWARDS the end of March the force at Korti was gradually withdrawn to Dongola, where Wolseley again fixed his head-quarters. A small garrison of Black troops was left at Korti.

The detachment at Merawi, under Colonel Butler, remained there and formed the rear-guard.

Lord Wolseley was now instructed to proceed to Cairo. This change was made as much for political reasons as for military purposes. It was thought not unlikely at the time that his services might be required to organize an army for operations in another direction. He reached Cairo on the 11th April, and immediately conferred with Sir Evelyn Baring and General Stephenson on the military situation.

Up to this time there is no reason to suppose that Lord Wolseley entertained any idea of abandoning the enterprise against Berber and Khartoum. At this period, however, the state of affairs on the Afghan frontier, and the collision which had occurred between the Russian and Afghan forces, led the British Government to reconsider the whole question of the Soudan Expedition.

On the 13th April the Marquis of Hartington telegraphed to Lord Wolseley as follows :—

‘In the condition of Imperial affairs it is probable that the expedition to Khartoum may have to be abandoned, and the troops brought back as soon as possible to Egypt. Consider at once what measures should, in that case, be promptly taken for safe withdrawal of troops. This would involve stopping advance from Souakim, but not hurried withdrawal.’

On the 14th April Lord Wolseley telegraphed that in the event of the Government determining to withdraw the troops from the Soudan, before completion of arrangements, he must know whether it was intended to retain Dongola, Wady Halfa, Korosko, or Assouan, as the frontier post. He said that if the position on the southern frontier of Egypt was to be exclusively one of defence, he would hold Wady Halfa and Korosko as outposts, with a strong brigade at Assouan. There would be no difficulty in withdrawing troops, but for the position in Egypt it was most essential that the announcement of withdrawal should be accompanied by an authoritative statement that the Government was determined to maintain a British garrison.

The next day Wolseley telegraphed his opinion on the question of withdrawal, strongly advising the retention of Dongola. His message, omitting irrelevant passages, was as follows :—

‘At, and south of Assouan, I have about 7500 British fighting soldiers. Retreat policy will require at least 2500 on the frontier, leaving 5000 available. For the sake of this handful, is it advisable to reverse Soudan policy? Retreat from Dongola hands that province over to the Mahdi, and renders loyalty of Ababdehs and other frontier tribes very doubtful. Many circumstances may lead to his sudden disappearance; time is a great element in our favour if we rest on our arms where we are. This policy entails no risk, for we could concentrate near Dongola or Hanneck whenever we wished, and I would strongly recommend its adoption, as most befitting our national dignity, and most likely to secure eventually the objects we have in Egypt. Withdraw Graham’s force if necessary; this will not seriously disturb Egypt; but hold on to Dongola province.’

There are few unprejudiced persons who will not agree in the soundness of the views above expressed.

The reply was as follows :—

'War Office, April 15th, 1885.

'Your telegrams of the 14th and 15th. Decision will probably be to adopt proposal for defence of Egyptian frontier at Wady Halfa and Assouan, as in your telegram of 14th. It is desirable that troops not required for this purpose should be concentrated as soon as possible, and available for any other service.

'We do not contemplate indefinite retention of British troops at Dongola, and do not insist on precipitate retirement from any particular point.'

The Government at this time had fully made up their minds to withdraw from the Soudan as early as possible.

Lord Wolseley, on the other hand, was anxious that before this step should be finally taken, the Mahdi should be crushed once for all, and in a very able despatch, dated the 16th April, set forth his views.

The document, which reads very like a protest against the policy of the Gladstone Cabinet, omitting some passages, is as follows :—

'Both from a military and a financial point of view, and also with regard to the general well-being of Egypt proper, the growing power of the Mahdi must be met not by a purely defensive policy on the frontier, whether at Assouan or Wady Halfa, but by his overthrow in the neighbourhood of Khartoum.

'The task of destroying the Mahdi's power and influence might be effected in two ways, either by pursuing the original plan of advancing and destroying his power in the neighbourhood of Khartoum, or by adopting a purely defensive attitude on the frontier of Egypt. The first is an operation of which one can see the end. If adopted, it would ensure the inhabitants of Egypt and many of the frontier tribes being well disposed towards us; and if these tribes did not actively side with us, they would certainly refrain from acts of aggression and hostility. Many of the preparations also for this advance have already been made, and much of the necessary expense has already been incurred. The second course would result in a long series of petty operations, almost certainly winding up with a war at least as serious as that now before us; it would turn against us all the frontier tribes, would unsettle the minds of the native Egyptians so much that English garrisons in towns like Kenah, Tintah, and others would

become a necessity, and would derive no benefit from—in fact, render absolutely wasted—all the money that has been spent, and the lives that have been lost in the campaign just concluded.'

The despatch concludes:—

'To sum up. The struggle with the Mahdi, or rather, perhaps, with Mahdi-ism, must come sooner or later. We can accept it now and have done with it once and for all, or we can allow all the military reputation we have gained at the cost of so much toil and hard fighting, all the bloodshed and all the expenditure of the past campaign, to go for nothing, and try and stave the final struggle off for a few years. These years will be years of trouble and disturbance for Egypt, of burden and strain to our military resources, and the contest that will come in the end will be no less than that which is in front of us now. This is all we shall gain by a defensive policy.

'In conclusion, I will only observe that I have in this despatch carefully abstained from entering upon general matters of policy, or of touching upon the question of which of the two courses is most befitting to our national dignity and honour. To do so would be beyond my province, and were it not, it would be hardly necessary. There can be but little difference of opinion as to which line of action is the more worthy of the English nation.'

The Afghan question still troubled the Ministry, and on the 20th April Lord Hartington telegraphed that the 'Government were about to announce that it was necessary to hold all the military resources of the Empire, including the forces in the Soudan, available for service wherever required. The Government would not,' he said, 'therefore make provision for further offensive operations in the Soudan, or for military preparations for an early advance on Khartoum, beyond such as could not be stopped with advantage, and did not involve hostile action, viz., river steamboats contracted for, and the completion of the Wady Halfa Railway. As to ulterior steps the Government reserved their liberty of action. With the cessation of active operations on the Nile, any considerable extension of the Souakim-Berber Railway was to be suspended; but as Souakim must be held for the present, it might be necessary to

occupy one or more stations in the neighbourhood, and as to the point to which that railway would be advanced the military authorities would be consulted. The Government would retain a garrison in Egypt, and defend the frontier.'

On the 23rd April Wolseley proposed that he should go to Souakim in order to form an opinion on the spot as to the points which it would be desirable to hold.

This was approved by the Government, and on the 24th Wolseley communicated the arrangements made for the disposition of the Nile force in his absence as follows :—

'On 1st June, troops at Merawi start for Dongola, at which place and Abu Fatmeh I propose to concentrate force now up the Nile. This movement will be completed by 1st July.

'In the meantime, railway to Ferket will be in a forward state, and able to assist greatly in the movement of troops and Civil Government officers on Wady Halfa. At present nearly all the troops are in huts; to move them in this present hot weather will be very trying to their health.

'When troops are concentrated at Dongola and Abu Fatmeh I shall expect orders before I move them to Wady Halfa, but if everything is peaceable and there are no signs of Mahdi's army, or of country rising and the Arab tribes closing round us, I should propose to send to Cairo and England, during concentration, the two cavalry regiments of the Camel Corps.'

On the 27th April Lord Wolseley was informed that he was to act in accordance with the proposals contained in his telegram of the 24th. The concentration, he was instructed, should be deliberate, but the movement from Merawi was to begin at once.

On the 28th Wolseley announced that he had given orders for the immediate evacuation of Merawi.

Lord Wolseley and his Staff left Cairo on April 29 for Suez, *en route* for Souakim. On arriving at Suez he immediately embarked for Souakim.

General Buller and Sir Charles Wilson being asked

to report on the political situation in the Soudan, expressed their views in a despatch, dated the 1st May, to Sir Evelyn Baring. According to the opinion of these two officers, 'the evacuation of Dongola would give new life to the Mahdi, who would establish himself there within a month from the departure of the English. Egypt would be overrun by the Mahdi's emissaries, and a large force would be required to maintain order. Sir Charles Wilson considered that the control of the Soudan was necessary to Egypt, and that if abandoned now, it would have to be reconquered within ten years.'

Sir Redvers Buller thought 'that if the British troops were wanted elsewhere they should be withdrawn at once, but that if a force could be spared it would be true economy to stay at Dongola, and advance in August on Berber, where only a small resistance would be met with.' He proposed 'that black troops should then be raised, and garrisons of them left in Berber, Debbah, and Dongola, under British officers with small body-guard of picked Europeans at each place.' General Buller added that 'he did not include a railway from Souakim to Berber as a part of his military policy.'

Sir Evelyn Baring in transmitting these opinions to Lord Granville, added some observations of his own.

He 'fully agreed with the opinions expressed on the subject of a retreat from Dongola. In view of the force which would be required to guard the frontier, and of the necessity, which he should consider imperative, of increasing the British force in Egypt proper, he felt confident that the policy of retreat would only place an insignificant force at the disposal of Government for operations elsewhere. He most earnestly hoped that Her Majesty's Government would reconsider this portion of their policy. He believed that it would be by far the

wisest plan to determine to remain at and about Dongola for six months, or perhaps till the end of the year.'

Sir E. Baring was in favour 'of adopting the plan of entrusting the government of the province to Abd-el-Kader Pasha, if he would consent to undertake it, and of setting to work at once to organize the black troops. The political effect of concentrating at Dongola would be very bad, and there were strong military objections to the adoption of this course, unless we meant to give up Dongola at once. He thought, therefore, that the orders for concentration should be cancelled, and that the troops should remain where they are for the present. He would earnestly impress upon Her Majesty's Government that it would be neither politically wise nor dignified to carry out at once the policy of retreat from Dongola and the immediate neighbourhood.'

All argument, however, was in vain. The Government remained unconvinced.

In the beginning of May the Merawi detachment moved down from Dongola, and the evacuation of the latter place commenced a few days later.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRAHAM'S ADVANCE TO TAMAAI.

A Convoy attacked—Arrival of Australian Contingent—News from Tamaai—Advance resolved upon—The March on Tamaai—General Graham's Report of the Operations—Details of the Proceedings—The Wells—Tamaai—Withdrawal of the Force.

ON the 26th March, another convoy was attacked, this time about two miles only from Souakim. The enemy on this occasion charged the head of the square, and were repulsed with considerable loss, none of them getting within five yards of the square. The British casualties were three wounded. It was said that 100 of the enemy were killed in this affair. The heat of the weather was now beginning to make itself felt, and several cases of sunstroke occurred amongst the troops engaged.

The first part of the Australian Contingent arrived at Souakim on the 29th March. The troops consisted of twenty-eight officers, 500 men of the battalion of Infantry, thirty men of the Artillery, and thirty-three men of the Ambulance Corps. The Infantry wore scarlet tunics and white helmets, and were armed with Martini rifles and sword-bayonets. The Artillery carried repeating carbines. The Contingent, which was commanded by Colonel Richardson, met with an enthusiastic reception from the naval and military forces at Souakim.

On the 1st April spies having reported that the enemy had abandoned Tamaai and Hasheen, General Graham sent some Cavalry and Mounted Infantry to

ascertain the truth. They found the enemy in force and fell back.

The railway had in the meantime been vigorously pushed forward in the direction of Handoub.

On the 2nd April General Graham determined to advance and attack Osman Digna in his position at Tamaai, although there was some doubt whether he would accept battle.

Accordingly at three a.m. the General paraded his troops in the moonlight, and at four marched them to McNeill's zeriba.

This zeriba (No. 1) was reached at 9 a.m., and the force halted until 10.15 a.m. for rest and refreshment. During this time arrangements were made for the defence of the zeriba, at which the 28th Bombay Native Infantry were left with two Gardner guns manned by marine artillery. The balloon was filled and made ready for use for reconnoitring purposes.

The troops were joined at the zeriba by the Grenadier Guards, the Berkshire Regiment, the 24th Company of the Royal Engineers, two Gardner guns, manned by the Naval Brigade, the Mounted Infantry, and one troop of the 9th Bengal Cavalry.

A finer body of troops than that which was now assembled at the zeriba was probably never got together. The men were in the best of spirits, and looked forward with eagerness to meeting the enemy.

The size and composition of the force were such as to render any possibility of it receiving a check from Osman Digna out of the question.

The place where it was hoped the engagement would come off was the spot where Graham had encountered such severe resistance just twelve months before. This time it was determined to be prepared to meet any number of the enemy.

The march was resumed at 10.15 a.m. with the undermentioned force, marching in square.

CORPS.	Officers.	Non-Commissioned Officers and Men.
Head-Quarter Staff	40	50
3rd Bat. Grenadier Guards	25	663
2nd Bat. Coldstream Guards and Staff	29	743
2nd Bat. Scots Guards	29	713
New South Wales Infantry	21	489
2nd Bat. East Surrey Regiment	16	593
Royal Marine Light Infantry	27	474
Shropshire Light Infantry	23	648
1st Bat. Berkshire Regiment and Staff	23	628
17th Company Royal Engineers	4	101
24th Company Royal Engineers	3	121
Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Artillery... ..	24	318
Cavalry Brigade	50	974
Naval Brigade	4	17
Indian Contingent	19	853
Medical Staff Corps... ..	19	184
Commissariat and Transport Corps	19	214
Balloon Detachment... ..	2	15
TOTAL.....	377	7798

1361 horses, 1639 camels, with provisions and water (14,500 gallons); 930 mules, with ammunition, hospital equipment, entrenching tools, &c.; 1773 followers.

The following details of the operations are taken mainly from General Graham's despatch.

Soon after starting, an attempt was made to reconnoitre from the balloon, and parties of the enemy were reported to be discovered some miles in front. The wind, however, increased to such an extent as to render the balloon unserviceable, and at eleven it had to be packed up.

'The square advanced slowly with frequent halts, owing to the density of bush in the neighbourhood of the zeriba.

'At 12.15 p.m., about three miles from zeriba No. 1, the cavalry

and Mounted Infantry reported the presence of the enemy in the bush in scattered groups, a few being on camels and the main portion on foot. These appeared to be at first advancing through the bush, but gradually fell back before the advance of the cavalry.

'At 12.45 p.m. the force halted for a short time, and at 1.30 p.m. the enemy were reported as retiring towards the Teselah Hills and Tamaai. At 2 p.m., about three miles from the Teselah Hills, the force halted for water and food, and the Mounted Infantry and a squadron of the 9th Bengal Cavalry were ordered to reconnoitre the position on these hills, reported to be lined with the enemy. The reconnaissance was well executed by the squadron of Bengal Cavalry, which sent out flanking parties to feel for the enemy, the Mounted Infantry acting in support, and moving up in échelon of companies.

'At first the enemy seemed inclined to defend the position, but their flanks being threatened they fell back on Tamaai. Teselah, a group of bare rocky hills, about 100 feet high, but practicable for guns, was occupied by the Mounted Infantry and Bengal Cavalry at three o'clock, and heliographic communication was opened with Souakim. From these hills an excellent view was obtained of the scattered villages of New Tamaai, lying between the ridges of low hills beyond Teselah, and the deep ravine Khor Ghoub, beyond which the country becomes exceedingly mountainous and intersected by ravines with precipitous sides.

'The Mounted Infantry were ordered to push on to the village, find out if it was occupied, and then, if practicable, move on to the water and water the horses. One company advanced about a mile south through a village, when fire was opened on them from another village further south; while the company moving towards the water in the Khor Ghoub were fired upon by the enemy on the ridges near. The fire was returned, and the Mounted Infantry fell back to the Teselah Hill, where they were ordered to join the cavalry, and return to No. 1 zeriba for the night.'

The main body of the force reached the Teselah Hills at 5 p.m. when the usual zeriba was formed.

About 1 a.m., on the 3rd, shots were fired into the camp from about 800 to 1000 yards. The moon was shining brightly, and the men at once stood to their arms, and the Grenadier Guards answered by a volley. This, and a shrapnel shell silenced the enemy, not, however, before one of Graham's men had been killed and two wounded.

At 4.30, on the 3rd, the troops were aroused, and the zeriba being left in charge of General McNeill with

the East Surrey and Shropshire Regiments, the advance was resumed at eight.

General Graham's object was to gain possession of a cluster of villages at New Tamaai which had long been Osman Digna's head-quarters, and to secure the water supply, either by attacking the enemy's position, or by drawing them into an engagement on the open ground near the villages. The ground over which the men advanced was rough and broken. It was free from bush, but was intersected with deep gullies, and studded with jutting rocks and boulders.

At 8.45 fire was opened at long range by about 200 Arabs on the Mounted Infantry and Bengal Cavalry in front. This was replied to. It soon became evident that the enemy were unable to oppose any serious resistance to the advance of the column.

The force proceeded through the villages, which were found to have been recently deserted, and at 9.30 the crest of the north side of the Khor Ghoub was gained.

The Mounted Infantry and Bengal Cavalry were all this time engaging the enemy on the right flank, but were unable to draw them from their positions.

The 2nd Brigade, under General Hudson, now moved to the right, advanced across the Khor Ghoub, and ascended the hill on the opposite bank. The Berkshire Regiment, with the marines on their right, opened fire from the highest point in the centre of the hill, and the Scots Guards threw out a company to fire up the 'Khor.' The Guards' Brigade and Australian Regiment moved forward in support of the 2nd Brigade, crowning the ridges on the north side of the 'Khor.' G Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery came into action on the left flank of the 1st Brigade, and opened fire on some parties of the enemy.

During those operations the enemy were keeping up

a distant fire, which resulted in one man being killed, and one officer and fifteen men wounded. The enemy's numbers and loss it was impossible to estimate with any accuracy, but a steady, well-aimed fire was kept up on such bodies as showed themselves, and the effect of the fire was to overcome any opposition they may have intended to make.

On descending to the bed of the khor it was found that at the spot where last year was running water, there were no signs of water beyond a little moisture, and well-holes partly filled in. By digging about four feet down a small supply of brackish water could have been obtained, and at a short distance there was a shallow pool of water on a bed of black mud.

It is probable that this failure of the water supply had had much to do with the disappearance of Osman Digna's forces.

Graham's force had brought with it only three days' supply of water, and this failure of the wells at Tamaai rendered it dangerous to advance against Tamanieb, for should the wells there be found to be also waterless, the position of the army would become very serious.

Under these circumstances, and in view of the retirement of the enemy, and their evident inability or indisposition to meet the force, the General considered it best to withdraw, as it would have been fruitless to attempt to follow Osman Digna into the mountainous country with no water for the transport animals.

At 10.20 a.m. Graham ordered the withdrawal of the force, by alternate brigades, from the position which had been taken up. By 10.40 a.m. the troops had recrossed the khor, the movement being covered by two Horse Artillery guns on the ridge to the north, which fired a few rounds of shrapnel at detached parties of the enemy.

New Tamaai was ordered to be destroyed, and it was fired as the troops retired through it. Considerable quantities of ammunition were destroyed. Osman Digna's residence is believed to have been among the huts burnt.

At noon the force reached No. 2 zeriba at the Teselah Hill.

As the troops fell back to the zeriba a handful of Arabs made their way, parallel to the line of march, along the distant hills to the right, keeping up a running fire on the British column. From zeriba No. 2 the force moved gradually back to the other zeriba, and thence to Souakim.

The total casualties were one man killed and six wounded. Only seven men fell out during the march.

It was a severe disappointment to the troops that, after all their exertions, after the efforts of the transport in preparing for the advance, the marches in the blazing sun to and from the zeribas, the heavy loss of life in the previous engagements, the enemy should refuse to await the attack, and that the want of water should prevent the column following him up.

The temporary occupation, followed by the destruction, of a wretched village was a poor result to show after such labour, effort, and suffering.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUAKIM.

Reconnaissances — Night Attacks at Souakim — Lieutenant Askwith — General Graham's Views with regard to Withdrawal — Raid on Takool — The Withdrawal from the Eastern Soudan — Departure of Lord Wolseley.

FROM the 11th to the 20th April, General Graham was occupied in making reconnaissances to Hasheen, Otao, Deberet, and Tambouk, taking a few prisoners, and capturing sheep and cattle.

The construction of the railway was at the same time being vigorously pushed forward, till it was close to Otao, making altogether a total distance of eighteen miles.

Meanwhile, Osman Digna's followers amused themselves cutting the telegraph-wires and damaging the railway works as opportunities offered.

They also made nightly attacks on Graham's camp. In order to check this, a series of automatic mines, to explode when trodden on, was placed outside the British lines. It does not appear that this measure answered the purpose intended, although an accidental explosion of one of the mines resulted in the loss of a promising young officer, Lieutenant Askwith, of the Royal Engineers.

Osman Digna's exact position at this period seems to have been somewhat of a puzzle to Graham, but on the 22nd he was able to telegraph that Osman was for the time without any large following, and that

his people were greatly discouraged by their losses in the various engagements, and also in want of food.

Graham was nevertheless unwilling to retire without having achieved something decisive, and on the 26th he telegraphed that he strongly recommended crushing Osman before the expedition should be withdrawn. He added, that with Osman crushed, the country would be at peace, and the native allies safe; whereas if the British force were withdrawn he would soon become as strong as ever, would threaten Souakim and punish the allies.

From the moment of Lord Wolseley's arrival at Souakim, the question of what was to be done was taken out of Graham's hands.

The Government had made up its mind, so far as such an operation was possible, not to go on with the railway to Berber, at all events for the present, and the inutility of keeping the expedition in Souakim in face of the declared policy of abandoning the Soudan generally, naturally struck Lord Wolseley.

On the 4th May he telegraphed to Lord Hartington that if it was positively decided not to push forward the railway as part of the campaign against the Mahdi at Khartoum, he advised the immediate embarkation of the Guards, the navvies, and Australians, leaving only the Indian Contingent and one British battalion for a garrison at Souakim. He added, on the 5th, that the heat was increasing, and the men of the Expedition would soon become sickly; that he did not think the further operations wished for by Graham were, in face of the hot weather, desirable. Among other suggestions he proposed to the Government to send back to England the ships laden with railway material, and to take up the railway before the troops fell back.

This despatch suggests the idea that Wolseley was

beginning to get a little tired of giving advice to the Government which was always asking his opinion and never acting upon it.

On the 8th he was instructed that the Government adhered to the decision to adopt the proposal for defence of the frontier in Wolseley's despatch of 14th April, but that the Government did not approve of his suggestion to take up the railway and ship off the plant; but that he should arrange to hold the line, pending consideration whether it would be carried onwards.

This last despatch was too much for Wolseley, who appears to have thought it hard enough to have to carry out a policy of which he disapproved, without having the initiation of it attributed to himself; and in the despatch of the 11th he replied, 'What you term my proposals, were the military dispositions recommended in order to give effect to your policy at Souakim, to stop the railway, and send away as many troops as could be spared for service elsewhere. If the garrison here is to be seriously reduced, the railway must be either taken up or abandoned.' He added, 'Unless you have some clearly defined Soudan policy to initiate, any military operations, such as the extension of the railway would entail, would be to throw away uselessly valuable lives.'

On the 13th Wolseley was instructed that the Government adopted the dispositions recommended in his telegram of the 5th. This was followed by preparations for the immediate embarkation of the expedition.

Before this, Graham had on the 5th made a raid on Takool, a village ten miles south of Otao, and twenty west of Souakim, and driven out the enemy, reported to be 700 strong. Graham's force burnt Takool, and captured between 1500 and 2000 sheep and goats in this the last exploit of the campaign.

The railway works were now discontinued, the troops called in from Otao, and the navvies withdrawn. As the last truck load came in from the front, it was followed and fired on by jeering Soudanese.

The store-ships, which had for weeks been lying in the roads with rails, plant, and machinery not yet unloaded, were ordered back to England with their cargoes.

On the 17th General Graham and his staff left Souakim with the Coldstream Guards. The Grenadiers, as well as the Australians and Scots Guards, sailed the following day.*

The remainder of the troops followed shortly after, and before the end of the month the whole of the expedition, with the exception of the Shropshire Regiment and a portion of the Indian Contingent, had left Souakim.

Of the results obtained by the expedition, there is but little to say. Its departure left Osman Digna still uncrushed, and the Souakim-Berber route still unopened; and Osman was enabled in 1885 to boast, as he had done in 1884, that he had driven the British out of the country.†

Of the achievements of the expedition, which was of far greater strength than its predecessor, it is no disparagement to the officers and men engaged to say that they did not equal those of the expedition of 1884.

Tamaai, Handoub, and other positions had been taken and occupied, and a small portion of the railway had been made, at a cost of 865,369*l.* This represented about the sum total of results.

* The Guards proceeded in the first instance to Alexandria, where they awaited orders, going eventually to Cyprus.

† It was reserved for an Abyssinian force under Ras Aloula to destroy Osman Digna's troops in a fight at Kufeit on the 23rd September, when, as reported, Osman was killed with some 3000 of his men.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EVACUATION OF THE SOUDAN.

Future Government of Dongola—Correspondence between the Government, Lord Wolseley, and Sir E. Baring—Withdrawal to Wady Halfa decided on—The Conservative Cabinet—Evacuation of Dongola already a *fait accompli*—Subsequent Events.

THE decision of the British Government to evacuate Dongola has been dealt with in a previous chapter.

The whole of the Soudan having to be abandoned the Government evinced some desire to consider how far some sort of government could be set on foot for the province of Dongola before leaving it.

Sir Evelyn Baring, to whom a question was addressed on the subject, referred to Lord Wolseley and General Buller. The former, regarding the matter from a military point of view, replied that a railway ought to be made to Hannek (just below the town of New Dongola), and the end of the line held by a British battalion, and Dongola itself should be garrisoned by 2000 black troops. The present Wahil, according to Lord Wolseley, should be appointed Mudir. 'It was safer,' added his Lordship, 'to attempt this than to hand Dongola over to the Mahdi and anarchy.'

General Buller replied that he did not think it possible to establish a government as proposed, and that the first thing to be considered was who was it proposed to take charge of it. His opinion was that no force of blacks that could be got together would be

sufficient to re-conquer and hold the province. He added that he did not believe the railway to Hannek to be anything but a waste of money; it would besides require all the present force as a covering party; he believed the British were withdrawing just as the fruit was falling into their hands; concluding with the sentence, 'I do not believe that when we leave Dongola any one else here will keep the Mahdi out.'

Sir Evelyn Baring, in forwarding the above opinions, said that he had also consulted General Stephenson, Nubar Pasha, Abd-el-Kader Pasha, and Colonel Watson, on the subject. He said, 'They were unanimous in thinking with him that to endeavour to establish any government at Dongola, if the English troops were to be withdrawn at once, would be quite useless.'

He added that 'in view of the decision of the Government he thought that instructions should be given to send down all troops, and as many of the civil population as wished to leave, to Wady Halfa,' and concluded in the following words :—

'Your Lordship will understand that we make this recommendation only because we consider it to be the necessary consequence of the decision of Her Majesty's Government to abandon the province of Dongola at once, but that it must in no way be taken to imply our agreement with that decision.

'Nubar Pasha, on behalf of the Egyptian Government, requests me to make a final and most earnest appeal to the Government of Her Majesty to postpone the departure of the British troops from Dongola for, say, six months, in order that there may be at least a chance of establishing a government there.

'Nubar Pasha fears that the retreat of the British from Dongola will react on Egypt, and especially on the southern provinces, to such an extent as will render it impossible for the Khedive's Government to maintain order, and that they will be forced to appeal to Her Majesty's Government for help to preserve order in the country, and that thus the present system of government which Her Majesty's Government have been at so much trouble to maintain will be found no longer possible.'

Nubar's appeal had no effect, and the question of the future government of Dongola occupied the British Government no more. On the 14th Sir E. Baring was informed that it was the intention to withdraw the whole force to Wady Halfa.

On the 16th Lord Wolseley telegraphed his ideas as to the British force which should remain in Egypt, viz.:—at Korosko and Wady Halfa, one cavalry and four infantry regiments, with one battery of artillery. In Cairo one regiment of cavalry, seven battalions of infantry, three batteries of artillery, and two companies of Engineers. At Alexandria, one battalion and a half of infantry, and one battery of artillery. This was to be in addition to the garrison at Souakim.

This distribution of the British forces was approved by the Government, and the troops at once began their journey down the Nile.

The departure of the soldiers from Dongola was accompanied by the exodus of a large portion of the native population, who feared to be left exposed to the vengeance of the Mahdi.

On the Conservative Cabinet coming into power in June, one of the first questions with which it occupied itself was that of Egypt.

It was impossible for the Ministry of Lord Salisbury to at once reverse the Egyptian policy of their predecessors, but the new Premier declared that England had a mission in Egypt, and that until it was accomplished it was idle to talk of withdrawal.

The evacuation of the Soudan, however, stood on a different footing. The steps taken by Mr. Gladstone's Government were so far advanced that the measure was already practically a *fait accompli*. As Lord Salisbury stated, 'the whole of the Soudan up to Dongola had been

evacuated, and the whole of Dongola, with the exception of a rear-guard left at Debbah, had been evacuated also; and 12,000 of the luckless population, to avoid the vengeance of the Mahdi, had fled from their houses and taken refuge in Upper Egypt.'

It was not, however, without inquiry that Lord Salisbury's Cabinet determined to proceed with the evacuation. Lord Wolseley was again consulted, and in a despatch of 27th June he wrote :—

' You cannot get out of Egypt for many years to come. If the present policy of retreat be persisted in the Mahdi will become stronger and stronger, and you will have to increase your garrisons and submit to the indignity of being threatened by him. Eventually you will have to fight him to hold your position in Egypt, which you will then do with the population round you ready on any reverse to rise against you. No frontier force can keep Mahdism out of Egypt, and the Mahdi sooner or later must be smashed, or he will smash you.

' To advance in the autumn on Khartoum and discredit the Mahdi by a serious defeat on his own ground would certainly finish him. The operation, if done deliberately, would be a simple one; and, as far as anything can be a certainty in war, it would be a certainty. Until this is done there will be no peace in Egypt, and your military expenditure will be large and increasing. My advice, therefore, is, carry out autumn campaign up the Nile, as originally intended. I would leave Souakim as it is.'

On the 2nd July the Government telegraphed that—

' Her Majesty's Government, after a full consideration of all the circumstances, were not prepared to reverse the orders given by their predecessors by countermanding the retreat of the force from Dongola.'

Thus the policy of evacuation was affirmed, and the troops continued their return journey down the Nile.

In a few weeks the greater part of the officers and men forming the expedition had left Egypt.

The services of the officers and men forming the Gordon Relief Expedition were referred to by Lord Salisbury on the 12th August in moving in the House of Lords a vote of thanks in the following words :—

'In considering their merits you must keep out of sight altogether the precise results and outcome of the labours they have gone through and the dangers they have incurred. Of course this is not the moment at which to broach controversial topics, and I only wish to say that you must look upon this fact—that they failed to fulfil the main purpose for which they were sent out through no fault of their own. The prize of success was taken from them, as it were by an overmastering destiny, by the action of causes, whatever their nature, over which they themselves had no more control than they would have over a tempest or earthquake.'*

There can be no doubt that Lord Salisbury's eulogium was well deserved.

The merits of the officers and men were unquestionable. That they did not succeed was owing to the incapacity of those who sent them, at the wrong time, by the wrong route, on their fruitless errand.

* Lord Wolseley was created a Viscount for his services with the Expedition.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

Sir H. Drummond Wolff's Mission—The Anglo-Turkish Convention—
British Intervention in Egypt—The Policy of the Future.

THE narrative has now been brought down to the summer of 1885, when the unfortunate Nile Expedition, as well as that to Souakim, had alike become things of the past.

What these two enterprises cost in money, in lives, and in human suffering, will probably never be fully realised. What they attained, or rather failed to attain, has been shown in the foregoing pages.

Want of space has necessarily prevented reference being made in this work to many events of interest affecting Egypt. Amongst recent occurrences, however, the mission of Sir H. Drummond Wolff, and the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish Convention, are sufficiently important to deserve notice, more especially considering the influence they may have on the future of the country.

Of the results of the mission it is as yet too early to hazard an opinion. But it is to be hoped that it will be the last of its kind. As a rule these so called 'missions' have been but of little use to the country which they were intended to benefit, and have delayed rather than accelerated the much-needed reforms.

Of the Convention, it is necessary to say only a few words. So much of it as provides for the infusion of the Turkish element into the Egyptian army may be

beneficial. So much as relates to an inquiry by an Ottoman Commissioner will be illusory, and so much as concerns the co-operation of Turkey in the work of reform will be impracticable. The withdrawal of the Army of Occupation, provided for by the Convention, is one of those events which may be safely regarded as relegated to the remote future.

Whatever that future may be, it is impossible that it can be marked by greater errors than have been witnessed in the past.

As for the present, England's position in regard to Egypt is, no doubt, a source of trouble and anxiety ; and whether England should ever have allowed herself to be embroiled in Egyptian affairs, is a point which has often been discussed. In considering the question, the attitude of other Powers, and especially of France, has not been sufficiently taken into account.

France, under M. Gambetta's dictatorship, took up a position with regard to Egypt which left England no choice between following Gambetta or being left out in the cold. When England joined France in assuring the Khedive of the protection of the two Powers against the military party, retreat was impossible without a sacrifice of national honour. The truth of this is in no way affected by the fact that France did, when words had to be supplemented by blows, back out of her engagements.

But, apart from considerations of the above character, there was the question of self-interest. England possessed interests in Egypt greater than those of all the other Powers combined. Those interests were imperilled by the revolt of 1882, and this fact alone was a sufficient ground for intervention.

Europe recognised this, and left to England the duty of suppressing the revolt. Had she not accepted

the task, an intervention by Turkey, or by one or more of the European Powers, must have ensued. On the political complications which would have resulted in either case, it is unnecessary to dilate.

The only way by which these could be avoided, was for England to step in and occupy the ground herself.

But, when England's action became inevitable, it should have been prompt and decisive. It was neither the one nor the other, and herein commenced the long series of errors committed.

The ultimatum delivered to Arabi in May 1882, should have been backed, not only by the sending of a fleet to Alexandria, but of an army as well. Had this demonstration failed in its effect, the bombardment should have followed, accompanied by the landing of a force sufficient to intercept Arabi's troops, and bring about a surrender. In June 1882, a great part of the mutinous soldiers was concentrated at Alexandria, and the rebellion, thus localised, might have been suppressed at one blow.

Instead of this, what was done? The fleet was sent to Alexandria, not, as was supposed, for the purpose of overawing the rebels, and inducing them to submit to the authority of the Khedive, but with the avowed object of protecting the lives and property of British subjects. Unfortunately, the step proved to be as futile for its avowed, as for its supposed, purpose. For the protection of British subjects, the ships, with no troops on board, were powerless in the midst of a large and unruly population in a city garrisoned by equally unruly troops. That this was so, was shown by the events of the 11th June.

The bombardment ensued; Alexandria was destroyed; massacres of Europeans took place all over the

country ; and time was given to the rebellious soldiery to rally at Kafr-Dowar and Tel-el-Kebir.

When too late to prevent these disasters, an army was sent to restore the Khedive's authority, and 40,000 men had to accomplish in September what 10,000 would have effected in June.

When the Arabi revolt was put down, and the Mahdi in his turn came to the front, England withdrew the bulk of her soldiers, and left Egypt to attempt single-handed the re-conquest of the Soudan.

When the Egyptian armies had been, one after the other, annihilated, Egypt was ordered, when too late, to abandon that country. Had this advice been given before, instead of after the defeat of Hicks and of Baker, all might have been well, and the Egyptian garrisons might have been withdrawn with comparative ease.

When too late to save Sinkat and Tokar, England, in 1884, sent an expedition to Souakim, and when many British lives had been lost and thousands of Arabs had been slaughtered in the Eastern Soudan, England, instead of following up her successes by crushing Osman Digna and opening up the Souakim-Berber route, withdrew her force, only to send another expedition in 1885, when too late, to effect those very objects.

Finally, having sent Gordon to Khartoum to bring away the garrisons in the Soudan, England, again too late, sent an army to his rescue by the most lengthy and circuitous route that could be found.

As it has been with the military operations in Egypt, so it has been with those undertaken for the pacification and reform of the country. The blunders made in the one direction have only been equalled by the mistakes committed in the other.

No sooner was the Arabi revolt put down than

England hastened to assure the world that she was going to withdraw from Egypt. No one asked for this assurance, and but few persons believed it. It had, however, one effect, viz., that of effectually checking all progress in the way of the reforms which England had declared should precede her withdrawal.

England, after the victory of Tel-el-Kebir, had a great opportunity open to her. She was then at the highest pinnacle of popularity. By suppressing the Arabi revolt she had rendered a great and lasting service to Europe. One Power after another tendered her congratulations and expressions of goodwill. Amongst the better class of Egyptians, harassed by Arabi's requisitions and exactions, a no less favourable feeling prevailed. With the lower orders the prestige, which the British troops had acquired by the events of the campaign, was sufficient to ensure obedience and submission. In short, the Valley of the Nile was in England's hands, and an opportunity was afforded her such as seldom occurs twice in a nation's history. Unfortunately it was not taken advantage of.

It is not denied that an attempt was made to take in hand the much-needed reforms. The fault committed was not so much in what was done, as in the way it was set about. To begin with, it was idle to talk of reforming the country when we were telling the whole world that our stay was a question of weeks or days. When measures for correcting abuses, for improving the administration, for putting the finances in order, and reviving confidence were of the most urgent necessity, Egypt was left without any authority capable of taking a single effective step, whilst the British Government was rendered powerless to do what was needed by its gratuitous declaration that its armed protection to the Khedive would be soon withdrawn and

that then its interference would cease. An authority which proclaims itself to be thus short-lived renders itself by so doing incapable of taking with advantage measures that require time to produce their fruit.

It may be asked what should England have done? Should she have deposed the Khedive, have torn up the Capitulations, and treated Egypt as a conquered country? The answer is that it was necessary to have done none of these things. The Khedive, who throughout had followed England's advice, was entitled to her fullest support, and the rights of foreigners under the Capitulations should have been amply secured to them.

What was required was for England to have boldly avowed that she had, at all events for a time, taken over the government of the country, and to have acted up to that avowal, putting the best men in the most responsible situations, throwing aside all transparent fictions, putting down abuses with a strong hand, and letting it be seen that she was determined, until its complete pacification, to rule Egypt in her own way.

What ought now to be done is perfectly clear, and neither Sir H. Drummond Wolff nor the Anglo-Turkish Commission need waste time in making inquiries or drawing up schemes. Put the Administration really, instead of nominally and half-heartedly, under English control. Discard all idea of going away in two years, or twenty years, or two hundred years, if the country is not brought to order and prosperity by that time. Declare that as long as England remains she will be responsible for Egyptian finances, and for the safety and property of Europeans. Simplify as much as possible the official staff and system, and take proper steps for securing whatever point may be needed as the frontier of Egypt proper.

If once this attitude is taken up, Europe will be

satisfied; Egypt's creditors will be contented; there will be no difficulty in arranging for the Suspension of the Capitulations; and real progress may be made.

Short of some such proceeding as this, no good can be done by Sir H. Drummond Wolff or by anybody else. It is not examining and reporting, but doing that is wanted. Cease talking and writing, and act. That is the advice which every Englishman who joins patriotism to some knowledge of the matter, must give at the present moment.

THE END.

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